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**The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Europe**

Grace Davie (ed.), Lucian N. Leustean (ed.)

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## Dedication

<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198834267.002.0004> Pages v–vi

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p. v *In memoriam*

*David Martin FBA (1929–2019)*

p. vi *who inspired us both* ↵

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# Acknowledgements

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MANY individuals are involved in the writing and publication of a book of this size and scope—we are grateful to each and every one of them.

Our thanks are due to Oxford University Press, and in particular Tom Perridge, for accepting the proposal in the first place and encouraging the project from start to finish. The Delegates gave valuable feedback on the initial proposal and Karen Raith has been on hand to help at every stage.

We are equally in debt to the many contributors who produced more than forty high-quality chapters, and who responded with great courtesy to comments and requests to redraft, sometime more than once. We are grateful for their learning and their insights, in many cases about their own countries, and for the willingness of European colleagues to communicate their findings in English.

We—as editors—come from different countries, different generations, and different disciplines. Both of us, however, completed a doctorate at the London School of Economics (one of us in 1975, the other in 2007) where we not only met but were inspired by Professor David Martin, FBA, a leading scholar of religion in Europe over many decades. It is to David's memory that this *Handbook* is dedicated in gratitude for wise advice and warm encouragement. We include Bernice Martin, David's wife and closest interlocutor, in our thanks.

The most immediate debts are, of course, personal. Friends and family not only encourage and support, but pay the price in terms of the time it takes to create, write, and edit a book of this nature. We are more than grateful to those, most especially our immediate households—Mark, Deborah, Clara, and Maia—who have seen us through.

Last but not least, we take this opportunity to express our gratitude to each other for an exceptionally fruitful, rewarding, and above all enjoyable collaboration.

Grace Davie and Lucian N. Leustean

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## Figures and Tables

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## List of Abbreviations

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AAC

Armenian Apostolic Church

AfD

Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland), Germany

AKP

Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*), Turkey

ALDE

Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

APRODEV

Association of World Council of Churches related Development Organizations in Europe

ARP

Anti-Revolutionary Party (*Anti-Revolutionaire Partij*), The Netherlands

BEPA

Bureau of European Policy Advisors

CARC

Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults, the Soviet Union

CC ECB

Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians–Baptists, the Soviet Union

CCEE

Council of the Bishops' Conferences in Europe (*Consilium Conferentiarum Episcoporum Europae*)

CCREC

Committee on the Christian Responsibility for European Cooperation

CDA

Christian Democratic Appeal (*Christen-Democratisch Appèl*), The Netherlands

CDU

Christian Democratic Union (*Christlich-Demokratische Union*), Germany

CD&V

Christian Democratic and Flemish (*Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams*), Belgium

CEC

Conference of European Churches

CEDA

*Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas*

CEE

Central and Eastern Europe

CFCM

*Conseil français du culte musulman*

CHP

Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*), Turkey

CHU

Christian Historical Union (*Christelijk-Historische Unie*), The Netherlands

CIDSE

*Coopération internationale pour le développement et la solidarité*

CIRIS

Cambridge Institute on Religion & International Studies

COMECE

Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community

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CORIF

*Conseil de réflexion sur l'islam en France*

CROCA

Council for Russian Orthodox Church Affairs

CSCE

Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe

CSGEU

Christian Study Group on European Unity

CSU

Christian-Social Union (*Christlich-Soziale Union*), Germany

CSV

Christian Social People's Party (*Chrëschtlech Sozial Vollekspartei*), Luxembourg

CUP

Committee of Union and Progress (*Ittihat ve Terakki Fikrasi*), Turkey

CVP

Christian Social Party (*Christelijke Volkspartij*), Belgium

DP

Democratic Party (*Demokrat Parti*), Turkey

DUP

Democratic Unionist Party, Northern Ireland

EC

European Communities

ECCSEC

Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society in the European Communities

ECEC

Ecumenical Commission on European Cooperation

ECHR

European Convention on Human Rights

ECOSOC

United Nations Economic and Social Council

ECR

European Conservatives and Reformists

ECSC

European Coal and Steel Community

ECtHR

European Court of Human Rights

EEAS

European External Action Service

EEC

European Economic Community

EECCS

European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society

EFTA

European Free Trade Association

EKD

Evangelical Church in Germany (*Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland*)

EP

European Parliament

EPP

European People's Party

EPRS

European Parliamentary Research Service

ESS

European Social Survey

EU

European Union

EUFoRB

EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief

EVS

European Values Study

FEREDE

Federation of Evangelical Religious Entities of Spain

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FJCE

Federation of Jewish Communities of Spain

FoRB

Freedom of religion and belief

FSU

Forward Studies Unit

GDR

German Democratic Republic

GOC

Georgian Orthodox Church

GOPA

Group of Political Advisors to the European Commission

ICCPR

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

IPCC

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

IR

International relations

IRA

Irish Republican Army

ISKCON

International Society for Krishna Consciousness

ISSP

International Social Survey Programme

JESC

Jesuit European Social Centre

KLF

Kazimierz Łyszczyński Foundation



LER

Lifestyle, Ethics, Religious Studies (*Lebensgestaltung, Ethik, Religionskunde*), Germany

LGBT+

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender+

MCB

Muslim Council of Britain

MDGs

Millennium Development Goals

MEP

Member of the European Parliament

NATO

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NGOs

Non-governmental organizations

NHA

Norwegian Humanist Association

NORDCORP

Nordic Collaborative Research Project

NSDAP

National Socialist German Workers' Party

OCIPE

*Office catholique d'information sur les problèmes de l'Europe*

OCU

Orthodox Church of Ukraine

ODIHR

Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

OHCHR

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

OSCE

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

ÖVP

Austrian People's Party (*Österreichische Volkspartei*), Austria

PCI

Italian Communist Party (*Partito Comunista Italiano*), Italy

PiS

Law and Justice Party (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*), Poland

PSC

Christian Social Party (*Parti Social-Chrétien*), Belgium

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RNGOs

Religious non-governmental organizations

ROC

Russian Orthodox Church

RomOC

Romanian Orthodox Church

SDGs

Sustainable Development Goals

SEE

Southeastern Europe

SGP

Political Reformed Party (*Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij*), The Netherlands

SRAS

Separation of religion and state

SRHR

Sexual and reproductive health and rights

TERR

Special Committee on Terrorism

TFEU

Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

TND

Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Unit

TPNRD

Transatlantic Policy Network on Religion and Diplomacy

UAOC

Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church

UDC

Union of the Centre (*Unione dei Democratici Cristiani e Democratici di Centro*), Italy

UDHR

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UK

United Kingdom

UN

United Nations

UNFPA

United Nations Population Fund

UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UOC-KP

Ukrainian Orthodox Church — Kyiv Patriarchate

UOC-MP

Ukrainian Orthodox Church — Moscow Patriarchate

USA

United States of America

USCIRF

United States Commission on International Religious Freedom

USSR

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

UUP

Ulster Unionist Party

UVF

Ulster Volunteer Force

WCC

World Council of Churches

WCE

*World Christian Encyclopedia*

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## The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Europe

Grace Davie (ed.), Lucian N. Leustean (ed.)

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### FRONT MATTER

## Chronology

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THE following dates and events offer an overview of religion in Europe from Antiquity until today. The chronology is necessarily selective, but places in a single timeline a series of interlocking narratives, that not only relate to each other but in many cases link the evolution of religions and the idea of Europe to developments in other parts of the world. The length of reign for political rulers (r.) and ecclesiastical positions (popes and patriarchs) are included.<sup>1</sup>

# Before the Common Era

70,000–30,000	Neanderthal burials in Europe and the Middle East
40,000–35,000	The Lion-man of the Hohlenstein-Stadel, a prehistoric ivory sculpture, one of the oldest examples of figurative art
40,000–10,000	Cave and rock paintings in Europe and Eurasia
35,000–11,000	Venus figurines in Europe and Eurasia probably with religious or ritual significance
10,000–8,000	Göbekli Tepe (Turkey), perhaps the oldest temple discovered and one of the oldest man-made sites of worship in the world
4500–1900	Sumerian city-states centred around a temple in Mesopotamia
c.3000	First dynastic Sumerian and Egyptian states
c.3000	The first Stonehenge monument (postholes date back to 8000 BCE)
2560	The Great Pyramid of Giza, the tallest man-made structure in the world until Lincoln Cathedral was completed in 1311 CE. The Pyramid texts are some of the oldest religious texts in the world.
3000–1450	Minoan civilization in Crete
1800	<i>The Epic of Gilgamesh</i> , one of the oldest religious texts written on clay tablets in ancient Mesopotamia
c.1300	Approximate historical setting of the story of Moses and the Exodus from Egypt
1200–400	Vedas and Upanishads (ritual and spiritual texts) written, developing religious ideas in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. <i>Rigveda</i> , one of the earliest texts, probably transmitted orally as early as 2,000 BCE.
c.1050	The Phoenician alphabet, which simplifies the ‘Proto-Canaanite’ script into twenty-two letters, spreads in the Mediterranean region influencing the emergence of Greek, Old Italic, and Anatolian scripts
c.1000–800	The Berlin Gold Hat, an artefact probably used in the sun cult in Central Europe
c.960	Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem

753	Proposed date of the founding of Rome by Romulus and his twin brother, Remus
c.750–480	Archaic Greece
c.700–250	The Hebrew Bible (Tanakh) written
586	Destruction of Jerusalem Temple and beginning of Jewish exile in Babylonia
c.563/480	Gautama Buddha, founder of Buddhism, born in ancient India
c.551	Confucius, founder of Confucianism, born in ancient China
c.520	Rebuilding of Second Temple in Jerusalem
510–323	Classical Greece
510–27	The Roman Republic (the classical Roman civilization)
c.470–399	Socrates, Athenian philosopher, one of the founders of Western philosophy
432	The Parthenon, a temple dedicated to goddess Athena, completed in the Acropolis of Athens
c.428–348	Plato, Athenian philosopher, and founder of the Academy, considered the first institution of higher learning in Europe
c.384–22	Aristotle, philosopher from ancient Greece, whose work influenced Judeo-Islamic philosophies and Christian theology in Western Europe
356–23	Alexander the Great rules one of the largest empires of the ancient world, stretching from Greece to north-western India
323–146	Hellenistic Greece
100–44	Julius Caesar, Roman general whose dictatorship enabled transition from the Roman Republic to the Roman Empire
27BCE–476 CE	The Roman Empire



# Common Era

c.29, 30 or 33	The crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth (Jesus Christ), the central figure in Christianity
c.36–68	The ministry of Paul and the composition of thirteen Epistles
c.49	The first Christian Council in Jerusalem (Jewish law not to be imposed on Gentile Christians)
c.60–100	The synoptic Gospels are written
c.90–110	The Gospel of John written
63	Roman conquest of Jerusalem
64	The great fire of Rome; Emperor Nero’s (r. 54–68) persecution of Christians and probably the date of Peter’s martyrdom in Rome
70	The destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple
c.135–217	Judah ha-Nasi finalizes the <i>Mishnah</i> (Oral Torah)
c.150–215	Clement of Alexandria, an early Church father, teaches at the Catechetical School of Alexandria
c.155	The first <i>Apology</i> of Justin Martyr
c.184–253	Origen of Alexandria, an early Church father, writes over 2,000 treaties
268	Paul of Samosata, bishop of Antioch, deposed for Monarchianism, a heresy which claims that God is one person, in contrast to Trinitarianism which defines God as three persons coexisting consubstantially as a unity
c.280	Gregory the Illuminator, converts King Tiridates of Armenia
c.305	Anthony of Egypt (the Great) organizes a colony of hermits. The translation of his biography into Latin leads to the spread of monasticism in Western Europe.
306	Constantine (r. 306–37), proclaimed emperor at York
312	Constantine adopts a Christian symbol for his standards at the battle of Milvian Bridge
313	Emperors Constantine and Licinius (r. 308–24) meet at Milan and agree a policy of toleration

c.315	Eusebius becomes bishop of Caesarea
325	Council of Nicaea condemns the theology of Arius and declares that Christ is 'one in essence with the Father'
330	Constantine inaugurates Constantinople as the 'New Rome'
c.330	Macarius of Egypt founds a monastery in the desert at Wadi-el-Natrun
337	Constantine baptized on his deathbed
c.360–435	John Cassian, probably born in Scythia Minor, establishes an Egyptian-style monastery near Marseilles, which serves as a model for Medieval monasticism
361	Julian ('the Apostate') (r. 361–3) becomes Roman emperor
c.370	Basil of Caesarea (330–379), Gregory of Nazianzus (the Theologian) (c.329–390) and Gregory of Nyssa (c.335–c.395), known as the Cappadocian Fathers, write works on Trinitarian theology
374	Ambrose becomes bishop of Milan
379–95	Theodosius I (the Great) (r. 379–95) makes Nicene Christianity the state church of the Roman Empire
381	First Council of Constantinople: the see of Constantinople assigned 'seniority of honour' after Rome
382	Pope Damasus I (366–84) holds council and lists the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments
386	Jerome, who translated most of the Bible into Latin, settles in a monastery at Bethlehem
395	Augustine, bishop of Hippo; his works, including the <i>City of God</i> and the <i>Confessions</i> , have a profound influence on Western thought
398	John Chrysostom becomes bishop of Constantinople
c.400	The completion of the Jerusalem Talmud
410	The sack of Rome by the Goths
431	The Council of Ephesus condemns Nestorius
451	The Council of Chalcedon affirms Christ as one person 'in two natures', an idea rejected by Christians in North Africa and the Middle East who will constitute 'Oriental' Orthodox churches
455	The sack of Rome by the Vandals and the Moors

c.460	The death of Patrick ‘the Apostle of Ireland’
c.470–544	Dionysius Exiguus from Scythia Minor, the inventor of <i>Anno Domini</i> (AD) dating used in the Gregorian and Julian calendars
496	Baptism of Clovis, King of the Franks (r. 481–511)
533–40	Emperor Justinian I the Great (r. 527–65) reconquers North Africa from the Vandals and Italy from the Goths
532	The Church of the Holy Wisdom (St Sophia) rebuilt by Justinian in Constantinople
c.540	Benedict of Nursia (d. 547) draws up his monastic rule at Monte Cassino
553	Second Council of Constantinople
c.563	Columba (521–97) leaves Ireland with twelve disciples and establishes a centre at Iona
c.600	Completion of the Babylonian Talmud
610	First revelation to Muhammad
612	King Sisebut (c.565–621), ruler in Hispania and Septimania, orders forced conversion of Jews to Christianity in Visigothic Kingdom
622	<i>Hijra</i> , beginning of the Muslim calendar
632	The death of Muhammad
638	Arab conquest of Jerusalem
644–56	Final recension of the Qur’an under Caliph Uthman ibn Affan of the Rashidun Caliphate (r. 644–56)
661	The death of Ali ibn Abi Talib, cousin and son-in-law of the Islamic prophet Muhammad, and the beginning of the schism between Sunni and Shiites. Ali ibn Abi Talib was the fourth Caliph of the Rashidun Caliphate (r. 656–61) and the first Imam of Shia Islam (r. 632–61)
664	The Synod of Whitby; King Oswiu of Northumbria (r. 654–70) rules that his kingdom should follow Rome rather than the customs practised by Irish monks at Iona
681	Third Council of Constantinople emphasizes Chalcedonian Christology stating that Christ has ‘two natural wills’
711–16	Arab conquest of Iberian Peninsula
726	Iconoclast controversy

731	Bede finalizes his <i>Ecclesiastical History of the English People</i>
732	Charles Martel halts the Arab advance near Poitiers
750–1258	The House of Wisdom (the Grand Library of Baghdad) of the Abbasid Caliphate enables the translation of secular texts from Greek, Persian and Indian into Arabic
756	Abd al-Rahman I (r. 756–88) proclaimed first Emir of Córdoba
768	King Karl (Charles) the Great (Charlemagne) (r. 768–800) and King Carloman I (r. 768–71) divide the Frankish kingdom (Karl sole ruler after 771)
787	Second Council of Nicaea upholds the veneration of icons
800	Charlemagne crowned Emperor (r. 800–814) by Pope Leo III (795–816) in Rome
823–7	Arab conquest of Crete and Sicily
843	‘The triumph of Orthodoxy’; icons restored in churches in the Byzantine Empire
848	Anskar, archbishop of Bremen, evangelizes Denmark and Sweden
863–7	The ‘Photian Schism’: communion broken between Pope Nicholas I (858–67) and Patriarch Photius I of Constantinople (858–67; 877–86)
863	Cyril and Methodius, the ‘Apostles of the Slavs’, set out from the Byzantine Empire to Moravia, translating the Bible and service books into Slavonic
929	Abd al-Rahman III (r. 929–61) declared first Caliph of Córdoba
961	Athanasius the Athonite founds the great Lavra on Mount Athos
988	Conversion of Russia: Prince Vladimir Sviatoslavich (the Great) of Novgorod, Grand Prince of Kyiv (r. 980–1015) is baptized by Byzantine missionaries
1009	Destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem
1031	Disintegration of the Caliphate of Córdoba
1033	Kingdom of Aragon established
1037	Unification of the kingdoms of Castille and León
1051	The Monastery of the Caves (Pechersk Lavra) founded in Kyiv

1054	The Great Schism; mutual anathemas exchanged in Constantinople between Cardinal Humbert of Moyenmoutier (c.1000/1015–61), representing the papacy, and Patriarch Michael I Cerularius of Constantinople (1043–59)
1059	Decree places papal elections in hands of cardinal bishops
1060–92	Norman conquest of Muslim Sicily
1071	Saljuk Turks defeat Byzantines at the Battle of Manzikert
1085	Christian conquest of Toledo initiating Arabic to Latin translation
1093	Anselm becomes Archbishop of Canterbury
1095	Pope Urban II (1088–99) preaches the First Crusade at the Council of Clermont
1096	The Rhineland massacres; crusaders kill thousands of Jews en route to the Holy Land
1099	Crusaders take Jerusalem
c.1100	Restrictive legislation passed in Hungary against Muslim population
1123	First Lateran Council
1130	Disputed election in Rome of Pope Innocent II (1130–43) and Pope Anacletus II (1130–8)
1139	Second Lateran Council
1143	Translation of the Qur'an into Latin (Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny, organizes study of Islam)
1146	Bernard of Clairvaux preaches the Second Crusade at Vézelay
1150	First ritual murder accusation against Jews in England
1170	Murder of Archbishop Thomas Becket of Canterbury (1162–70)
1179	Third Lateran Council
1187	Conquest of Jerusalem by Saladin (Salah ad-Din) (r. 1174–93), founder of the Ayyubid dynasty and Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques
1190	Maimonides (d. 1204) completes <i>Mishneh Torah</i> , one of the most influential books of medieval Jewish thought

1189–92	Third Crusade
1204	Fourth Crusade diverted to Constantinople
1209	Francis of Assisi's first rule approved by Pope Innocent III (1198–1216)
1212	Children's Crusade
1212	Christian victory over Almohads of al-Andalus at Las Navas de Tolosa
1215	Fourth Lateran Council
1216	Establishment of Dominican friars
1229	Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II (r. 1220–50) and Al-Kamil (c.1177–1238), the fourth Ayyubid Sultan of Egypt, sign a treaty ceding Jerusalem and Bethlehem to the Kingdom of Jerusalem; the Temple area, the Dome of the Rock, and the Aqsa Mosque remain under Muslim control
1232	Papal Inquisition established by Gregory IX (1227–41)
1237	Muhammad I (r. c.1238–73) establishes Granada as the capital of newly founded tributary state of Nasrids, a situation that continues until 1492
1237–40	Kyivan Russia overrun by Mongol Tatars
1240	The Disputation of Paris (the Trial of the Talmud) at the court of King Louis IX of France (r. 1226–70); four rabbis defend the Talmud against accusations that it contained blasphemies against Christianity
1242	The Talmud and Jewish religious manuscripts burned on streets of Paris
1244	Jerusalem reconquered by Muslims
1245	First Council of Lyon formally deposes Emperor Frederick II
1248	Christian conquest of Almohad Seville
1225–74	Thomas Aquinas, influential Catholic theologian and philosopher; author of <i>Summa Theologiae</i> (1265–74)
1261	Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos (r. 1261–82) of the Byzantine Empire retakes Constantinople
1263	The Disputation of Barcelona; a formal ordered debate between representatives of Christianity and Judaism regarding whether or not the Talmud and midrash showed that Jesus was the Messiah

1274	Second Council of Lyon decrees union between Rome and the Orthodox, decisions rejected in the Greek and Slav worlds
1290	Jews expelled from England
1291	Siege of Acre; nominal end to the Crusades
1295	Conversion of the Mongol dynasty to Islam; destruction of the Nestorian Church
c.1299–1323/1324	Osman I (Osman Ghazi), founder of the Ottoman dynasty and first Sultan of the Ottoman Empire (c.1299–1922)
1302	Pope Boniface VIII (1294–1303), in <i>Unam Sanctum</i> , proclaims universal jurisdiction of the pope and the superiority of the spiritual power over the secular
1314	Dante's <i>Divine Comedy</i>
1324	Marsilius of Padua writes <i>Defensor pacis</i> ; the Church should be ruled by general councils and its property depends on the state
1287–1347	William of Ockham, Franciscan friar and major theologian and philosopher of the Middle Ages
1327	Death of 'Meister' Eckhart, German Dominican mystic
1337	The Hesychast controversy; the teaching of Gregory Palamas on the Divine Light upheld by Councils at Constantinople, 1341, 1347, and 1351
c.1340	St. Sergii of Radonezh (1314–92) founds the Monastery of the Holy Trinity near Moscow
1347–61	Black Death in Europe
1375–82	John Wycliffe (c.1328–84) attacks clerical wealth, monasticism, and the authority of the pope
1378	The Western Schism (1378–1417); rival popes, Urban VI (1378–89) in Rome and Clement VII (1378–94) in Avignon
1389	Battle of Kosovo
1391	Mass attacks on Jews of Iberia, provoking huge numbers of forced conversions and laying the ground for the 'converso' crisis of the fifteenth century
1413	Jan Huss (1369–1415) writes <i>De Ecclesia</i> asking for church reform
1414–18	The Council of Constance affirms that general councils are superior to the pope; Jan Huss burnt by the Council in 1415; election of Pope Martin V (1417–31) ending the Western Schism

1418	First publication of the <i>Imitatio Christi</i> , thought to be written by Thomas à Kempis
1438–9	The Council of Ferrara-Florence proclaims reunion of Rome and the Orthodox; rejected in the Greek and Slav worlds
1449	First laws of ‘blood purity’ against converts passed in Toledo
1453	Constantinople falls to the Ottoman Empire ruled by Sultan Mehmed II the Conqueror (r. 1444–6; 1451–81)
c.1455	Gutenberg Bible printed
1479	The establishment of the ‘Spanish Inquisition’ with papal approval
1488	Voroneţ Monastery, also known as ‘the Sistine Chapel of the East’, and Suceviţa Monastery (1585) in Moldavia, display exterior wall paintings depicting ancient Greek philosophers
1492	Jews expelled from Spain; Muslim Granada conquered; Muslims guaranteed freedom of religion as subjects of the Christian sovereigns, but many leave
1492	Christopher Columbus (1451–1506) sails from Seville
1493–4	Pope Alexander VI (1492–1503) partitions newly discovered lands between Spain and Portugal
1498	Savonarola (1452–98) burned in Florence
1500	First major attack on the Qur’an published in Valencia
1502	Muslims of Castile forced to convert to Christianity, initiating the ‘Morisco’ period; Aragon adopts similar policies in 1526
1506	Pope Julius II (1503–13) lays foundation stone of St. Peter’s in Rome under the guidance of architect Donato Bramante (1444–1514)
1508	Michelangelo (1475–1564) paints ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome
1517	Martin Luther (1483–1546) posts 95 theses at Wittenberg Cathedral
1519–23	First edition of the printed Babylonian Talmud published with support of Pope Leo X (1513–21) in Venice
1520–66	Suleiman the Magnificent (the Lawgiver), the longest-reigning Sultan of the Ottoman Empire
1521	The papal bull <i>Decet Romanum Pontificem</i> excommunicates Luther; the Diet of Worms; Luther argues before Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (r. 1519–56)



1522–3	Ignatius Loyola's <i>Spiritual Exercises</i>
1524	Franciscans arrive in Mexico
1525	Anabaptist Thomas Münzer (c.1489–1525) executed
1528	The Reformation adopted in Berne
1529	The Diet of Speyer; reforming members (six princes and fourteen cities) make a formal <i>protestatio</i> against the Catholic majority (hence the term 'Protestant')
1530	The Diet of Augsburg; Lutherans present the Confession of Augsburg drafted by Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560); Denmark adopts a Lutheran creed
1534	The Act of Supremacy in England
1535	Execution of Thomas More (1478–1535)
1536	John Calvin's <i>Institutes</i>
1539	King Henry VIII's (of England) (r. 1509–47) <i>The Great Bible</i> printed
1543	The first printed Latin translation of the Qur'an (based on Robert of Ketton's twelfth-century text) published by Theodore Bibliander (1509–64) in Basel
1553–8	Catholic reaction in England under Queen Mary Tudor (r. 1553–8)
1555	The Peace of Augsburg establishes the principle of 'cuius regio, eius religio' ('whose realm, his religion')
1559	First National Synod of the French Reformed Church
1560	John Knox (c.1514–72) establishes a reformed church in Scotland
1561	The Belgic Reformed Confession adopted in Antwerp
1564	Decrees of Council of Trent confirmed by Pope Pius IV (1559–65) (the first of the Counter-Reformation popes)
1565	Publication of the <i>Shulhan Arukh</i> by Joseph Caro (1488–1575), the most authoritative Code of Jewish Law
1573–81	Patriarch Jeremias II of Constantinople (1572–9; 1580–4; 1587–95) meets and corresponds with Lutheran theologians Jakob Andreae (1528–90) and Martin Crusius (1524–1607) from Tübingen
1574	Calvinist University of Leiden established in Holland

1589	Patriarch Jeremias II of Constantinople (1572–9; 1580–4; 1587–95) visits Moscow; the Church of Russia becomes a Patriarchate
1593	King Henry IV of France (r. 1589–1610) becomes a Catholic, ending the wars of religion
1593	Sweden adopts the Lutheran Augsburg Confession
1596	The Council of Brest-Litovsk declares that the majority of Orthodox in Ukraine are 'Uniates' (joined with Rome); Greek Catholic churches established in other predominantly Orthodox territories
1598	The Edict of Nantes gives guarantees to French Protestants
1600	Giordano Bruno (1548–1600) burnt in Rome
1609–14	<i>Moriscos</i> expelled from Iberia
1629	The <i>Eastern Confession of the Christian Faith</i> , attributed to Patriarch Cyril I Loukaris of Constantinople (1612; 1620–3; 1623–3; 1633–4; 1634–5; 1637–8) and influenced by Calvinism, published in Geneva; a Greek translation appears in Constantinople in 1631
1642	The Council of Iași condemns Loukaris' <i>Eastern Confession of the Christian Faith</i> and approves with revisions the alternative of Peter of Mohyla, Metropolitan of Kyiv
1648	The Peace of Westphalia ends Thirty Years' War
1656	Jewish resettlement in England
1660	Restoration of King Charles II (r. 1660–85) and the Anglican Church in England
1666–7	Schism of the Old Believers in Russia
1670	Blaise Pascal's (1623–1662) <i>Pensées</i> published posthumously
1672	The Council of Jerusalem, led by Patriarch Dositheus II of Jerusalem (1669–1707), rejects the 1629 <i>Eastern Confession of the Christian Faith</i> and issues a <i>Confession</i> condemning Calvinist doctrines
1683	Battle of Vienna representing the westernmost limit of Ottoman advance
1685	Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1598) and the Huguenot exodus from France
c.1700–60	Israel ben Eliezer (Baal Shev Tov), founder of Jewish Hasidism
1703–91	John Wesley, leader of a revival movement within the Church of England known as Methodism

1721	Emperor Peter the Great (r. 1682–1725) abolishes the Moscow Patriarchate and places the Church under the ‘Holy Synod’
1724	Church of Utrecht (Jansenist connections) separates from Rome
1734	Voltaire publishes <i>Lettres philosophiques</i>
1762	Jean-Jacques Rousseau publishes <i>Emile</i>
1773	Dissolution of the Jesuit order by Pope Clement XIV (1769–74)
1774	Treaty of Küçük Kainarçi between the Russian and Ottoman empires
1781	Emperor Joseph II’s (r. 1765–90) <i>Patent of Toleration</i> granting limited freedom of worship to non-Roman Catholic Christians
1782	<i>Philokalia</i> , a collection of monastic texts of major Hesychasts, compiled by the Greek monk Nikodimos and Makarios, Bishop of Corinth, published in Venice
1783	Treaties of Versailles end French and Spanish hostilities against Great Britain in the American Revolutionary War; American Independence
1787	Legalization of Protestant marriages in France
1789–99	The French Revolution
1790	The National Assembly in France forbids the taking of monastic vows
1791	Emancipation of the Jews in France
1792–1802	French Revolutionary Wars
1793	Translation of <i>Philokalia</i> into Slavonic
1793–4	Terror and ‘Dechristianization’ in France
1798	Expedition of Napoleon Bonaparte to Egypt provoking ‘Orientalism’ and the Islamic reformist movement; Napoleon becomes First Consul of France in 1799 and Emperor in 1804 (r. 1804–14; 1815)
1801	Napoleon Bonaparte’s Concordat with Rome
1805	Serbian revolt against Ottoman rule

1807	Slave trade becomes illegal in Britain
1814	Slave trade becomes illegal in Holland
1814	Restoration of the Jesuit order by Pope Pius VII (1800–23)
1817	Union of Lutherans and Calvinists in Prussia and other German states
1818	First Reformed Jewish congregation established in Hamburg
1821	Greek revolt against Ottoman rule; execution of Patriarch Gregory V of Constantinople (1797–8; 1806–8; 1818–21)
1830	Hussein Dey (1765–1838), Ottoman ruler of the Regency of Algiers, surrenders to the French army, initiating French colonization of North Africa
1832	Autonomy of the Serbian Orthodox Church
1834	Official abolition of the Spanish Inquisition
1840	‘Damascus Affair’ revives medieval blood libel charge, directed against the Jewish community of the city
1848	Pope Pius IX (1846–78) flees to Gaete (in Naples) due to pressure from Italian nationalists and newly declared Roman Republic (1849); returns to Rome in 1850
1848	Slavery forbidden in all French territories
1850	Re-establishment of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales
1852	Autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of Greece
1854	Papal bull issued by Pius IX establishes the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary as an article of Catholic faith
1858	Visions of Bernadette at Lourdes
1859	Charles Darwin publishes <i>On the Origin of Species</i>
1864	Pope Pius IX publishes <i>Quanta cura</i> and the attached <i>Syllabus errorum</i> ; high point in the opposition between Catholicism and liberalism
1867	First Lambeth Conference of the Bishops of the Anglican Communion

1868	Benjamin Disraeli who converted to Christianity as a child, becomes Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (1868; 1874–80), the first leader of Jewish descent of a government in Europe
1869–70	First Vatican Council; decree of papal infallibility
1871	Formation of the Old Catholic Church
1871	Disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Ireland
1872	The Patriarchate of Constantinople condemns phyletism or ethnophyletism (i.e. applying the principle of ethnicity to church structures), in response to the emergence of the Bulgarian Exarchate
1875	World Alliance of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches formed in London
1879	Autocephaly of the Serbian Orthodox Church
1879–82	Jules Ferry (1832–93) promotes secular education in France
1881	Pogroms break out against the Jews in Russia
1885	Autocephaly of the Romanian Orthodox Church
1890	The term ‘Zionism’ coined by Nathan Birnbaum (1864–1937), an Austrian Jewish publicist
1891	Pope Leo XIII (1878–1903) publishes <i>Rerum Novarum</i> on the social problem
1894–9	‘Dreyfus Affair’ in France
1897	First Zionist Congress convened in Basel, Switzerland
1903	The Kishinev pogrom against the Jewish community in Bessarabia; second pogrom in 1905
1905	Separation of church and state in France; the state seizes church property
1914–18	First World War
1914–23	Armenian Genocide
1917	The Balfour Declaration issued by the British government supporting a ‘national home for the Jewish people’ in Palestine
1917	Georgian Orthodox Patriarchate restored

1917–18	The Council of the Russian Orthodox Church and the re-establishment of the Moscow Patriarchate
1918	Decree on the separation of church and state in the Soviet Union
1920	Serbian Orthodox Patriarchate re-established
1924	Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and Caliphate
1924	Autonomy of the Finnish and Polish Orthodox churches
1925	Romanian Orthodox Patriarchate established
1927	Legion of the Archangel Michael (the Iron Guard), a fascist movement demanding a return to Orthodox Christian values, founded in Romania
1928	Hassan al-Banna (1906–49) founds the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt
1929	Lateran Treaty, Rome
1932–67	Karl Barth (1886–1968) publishes the four-volume <i>Church Dogmatics</i> ( <i>Die Kirchliche Dogmatik</i> )
1933	Adolf Hitler comes to power in Germany (1933–45); Nazi boycott of Jewish business and Jews excluded from the civil service; anti-Semitic statements lead to the emigration of many Jews
1934	Creation of the Confessing Church in Nazi Germany, in defiance of the Nazi-sponsored church
1937	Autocephaly of the Albanian Orthodox Church
1939–45	Second World War; millions of Jews murdered and Jewish communities dislocated and destroyed across Europe
1943	Concordat between the Russian Orthodox Church and Stalin
1946–56	Discovery of ancient Jewish religious manuscripts (the Dead Sea Scrolls) (c.408 BCE–318 CE) in the Qumran Caves in the West Bank
1947	Abolition of the Eastern-rite (Uniate) Catholic Church in the Soviet Union
1948	The State of Israel declares itself an independent Jewish state
1948	World Council of Churches established in Amsterdam

1948	Formation of the Evangelical Church in Germany ( <i>Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland</i> , EKD): a federation of the Protestant churches in East and West Germany; East German churches forced to leave by communist authorities in 1969
1950	The Schuman Declaration leads to the European Coal and Steel Community, the first supranational institution in post-war Europe
1950	Pope Pius XII (1939–58) proclaims the Virgin Mary's bodily assumption an article of Catholic faith
1953	Recognition of the Bulgarian Orthodox Patriarchate by the Patriarchate of Constantinople
1955	Istanbul pogrom against the Christian Greek minority
1956	Independence of Tunisia and Morocco
1956	Cardinal József Mindszenty (1945–73), leader of the Catholic Church, granted asylum in the US Legation in Budapest until 1971
1957	Treaty of Rome signed by Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany
1958–64	Anti-religious campaign under Nikita Khrushchev, First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1953–64)
1961–89	The Berlin Wall, a physical symbol of ideological divisions between East and West
1961	The Russian Orthodox Church joins the World Council of Churches, together with most Orthodox churches, but not the Roman Catholic Church
1962	Independence of Algeria
1962–5	Second Vatican Council: Catholicism's opening towards the modern world, including the promulgation of <i>Nostra Aetate</i> (1965) paving the way for improved dialogue with non-Catholic religions
1964	Pope Paul VI (1963–78) declares Benedict of Nursia as 'Patron Saint of all Europe'. Between 1980 and 1999, Pope John Paul II proclaims five additional patron saints of all Europe: Cyril and Methodius, Bridget of Sweden, Catherine of Siena, and Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)
1965	Catholic-Orthodox Joint Declaration lifting the 1054 excommunications between the Roman Catholic Church and the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople
1966	Archbishop Ramsey of Canterbury (1961–74) visits Pope Paul VI in Rome
1967	Reunification of Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty following territorial conquests in the 'Six-Day War'
1968	The papal encyclical <i>Humanae Vitae</i> , reiterating the Church's ban on artificial methods of birth control

1968	Pope Paul VI becomes the first pope to visit Latin America where he inaugurates the Medellín bishops' conference in Colombia with Protestant observers in attendance
1970	World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Presbyterian and Congregational) created
1978	Election of Karol Wojtyła from Poland as Pope John Paul II (1978–2005)
1979	Nobel Peace Prize to Mother Teresa (1910–97) for work with the destitute in Calcutta
1979	The Iranian Revolution
1980–9	Catholic support for Poland's Solidarity movement
1984	The Vatican mediates a Chile–Argentina boundary dispute (one of many papal mediations in Latin America)
1984	Father Jerzy Popiełuszko (1947–84), a Roman Catholic priest associated with the Solidarity movement, murdered in Poland
1988	Millennium celebrations of Russian Christianity and prospects of increased toleration of religion by the Soviet state
1988	Salman Rushdie publishes <i>The Satanic Verses</i>
1988–2020	The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan
1989	Mgr. Marcel Lefebvre (1905–91), a traditionalist Catholic, excommunicated by the Vatican for consecrating four bishops
1989	Weekly prayer for peace at St. Nicholas Church in Leipzig leads to non-violent demonstrations in the city; East German exodus to West Germany and fall of the Berlin Wall
1989	Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1985–91) meets with Pope John Paul II at the Vatican; the Ukrainian Eastern-rite (Uniate) Catholic Church authorized in the Soviet Union
1989	Action of the Romanian dictatorship against a Protestant pastor, sparks the rising in Timișoara; Nicolae Ceaușescu and his wife executed on Christmas Day; the fall of the communist regime in Romania
1989	Christian ceremonies take place in all Eastern bloc countries
1989	Start of the headscarf controversy ( <i>l'affaire du foulard</i> ) in France
1990	Anti-Armenian pogrom in Baku, Azerbaijan
1990	Hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews able to leave the country and move to Israel



1990	The German Democratic Republic ceases to exist; its territories join the Federal Republic of Germany
1991	Dissolution of the Soviet Union
1991–2001	Yugoslav Wars leading to the break-up of former Yugoslavia along ethnic and religious lines
1991	Relations between Rome and the Orthodox churches worsen over alleged proselytism in Eastern Europe and property claims of the Uniate churches
1991	Meissen Agreement between the Church of England and the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD)
1991–2002	Civil war between the Algerian state and Islamist groups
1992	The Maastricht Treaty, the foundation treaty of the European Union, signed by twelve Member States of the European Communities
1992	The assembly of the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland, a new ecumenical body which includes Catholics, meets for the first time
1992	Catholic and Orthodox leaders in Yugoslavia appeal jointly for a cessation of war and ethnic cleansing
1992	The General Synod of the Church of England votes to ordain women to the priesthood; first ordinations in 1994
1993	The Balamand declaration, a report of the Roman Catholic Church and nine Orthodox churches which aims to improve relations between them
1994	Porvoo Communion of fifteen Anglican and Evangelical Lutheran churches in Europe
1994	Yasser Arafat (Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, 1969–2004), Yitzhak Rabin (Prime Minister of Israel, 1974–7; 1992–5) and Shimon Peres (Foreign Minister of Israel, 1986–8; 1992–5) share the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords
1995	Bombing in the Paris Métro relating to the civil war in Algeria
2000	The Moscow Patriarchate publishes <i>The Basis of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church</i>
2004	French law prohibits the wearing of conspicuous religious symbols in public schools—Muslim headscarves, Sikh turbans, Jewish skullcaps (kippah), and large Christian crosses
2004	The Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia, and Malta and Cyprus join the European Union; enlargement continues with Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 and Croatia in 2013
2005	Election of Pope Benedict XVI (2005–13), who resigns in 2013 taking the title of ‘pope emeritus’

2007	The Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia signs the Act of Canonical Communion with the Moscow Patriarchate, after eighty years of separation
2009	Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) introduced by the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon (signed in 2007) institutionalizes an ‘open, regular and transparent dialogue’ between the European institutions and religious and philosophical communities
2011	<i>Lautsi v. Italy</i> case ruled that that crucifixes displayed in school classrooms do not violate the European Convention on Human Rights
2011	The Arab Spring spreads across the Middle East and North Africa; war breaks out in Syria
2013	Election of Pope Francis I, an Argentinean—the first modern non-European pope
2014	A self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (known also under the Arabic acronym Daesh) attracts Western European fighters; large number of Christian and Yazidi communities destroyed
2014	Russia’s takeover of Crimea and the start of the conflict in eastern Ukraine
2015	Hundreds of thousands of refugees travel from the Middle East and North Africa to Europe
2015	Pope Francis publishes <i>Laudato Si’</i> on the environment
2016	The Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church takes place in Crete
2018-9	The Orthodox Church of Ukraine officially recognized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople; the Russian Orthodox Church breaks off relations with the Ecumenical Patriarchate
2019	The United States recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel
2020	The United Kingdom leaves the European Union, following 2016 United Kingdom European Union membership referendum
2020	The COVID-19 pandemic reaches Europe; religious buildings closed for worship and other gatherings
2020	Hagia Sophia in Istanbul reopens as a mosque, reversing the 1935 decision of the secular Turkish Republic which declared it a museum
2020	The Ecumenical Patriarchate publishes <i>For the Life of the World: Towards a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church</i>
2020	Pope Francis publishes <i>Fratelli tutti</i> on global solidarity, the COVID-19 pandemic, and racism

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### FRONT MATTER

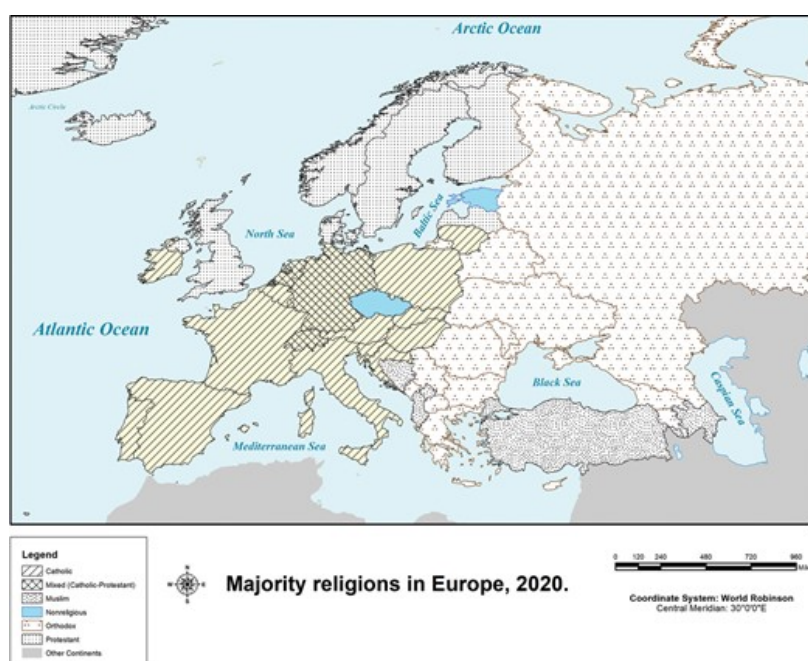
## Map

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This map outlines the geographical spread of the dominant confessions in Europe in 2020. The term ‘outline’ has been chosen advisedly. The detail of the religious constituencies of each country, and their changes over time, can be found in the Appendix (pages 793–7).

For more detailed information displayed in map form, the reader is directed to the open-access and continually updated *Atlas of European History*. This contains a multiplicity of maps covering more than two millennia of European history, many of which relate to the material discussed in the *Handbook*.<sup>1</sup> For the modern (post-1945) period, this can be supplemented by the *Atlas of Europe*.<sup>2</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Atlas\\_of\\_European\\_history](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Atlas_of_European_history)

p. l 2 See [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Atlas\\_of\\_Europe](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Atlas_of_Europe) ↵

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## The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Europe

Grace Davie (ed.), Lucian N. Leustean (ed.)

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### CHAPTER

# 1 Religion and Europe: Methods, Theories, and Approaches

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## Abstract

This chapter introduces *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Europe*: its rationale, timeline, geographical scope, approach, structure, and contents. The timeline—from Antiquity to the present day—is captured in a series of ‘portraits’ taken from European museums. The scope, methods, theories, and approaches are then outlined. No single theory or theoretical approach drives the volume as a whole, but particular attention is paid to the work of Max Weber, Jürgen Habermas, and David Martin. The structure (five parts) and contents (forty-five chapters and a statistical appendix) of the *Handbook* are carefully set out. A number of cross-cutting themes are then identified, including the role of religion in the circulation of knowledge and the tensions between Europe and its constituent states. The future is difficult to predict as Europe becomes not only more secular, but more religiously diverse.

**Keywords:** Europe, history, methods, theories, approaches, Max Weber, Jürgen Habermas, David Martin, secular, diverse

**Subject:** History of Religion, Religion

**Series:** Oxford Handbooks

BOTH in their lived and institutionalized forms, religion and religious ideas have shaped—and continue to shape—the idea of Europe, the lives of Europeans, the geographical boundaries of the European continent, and the art and culture contained within them. The reverse is equally true: over two millennia, religions and religious life have been moulded by the entity known as Europe. The goal of this *Handbook* is to interrogate these relationships from multiple perspectives. This Introduction begins, however, with four ‘portraits’, all of which capture the challenge ahead; they are by no means exhaustive but each artefact or painting says something about the depth, scope, and subtlety of the relationships under review.

## Representations of religion and the idea of Europe: four portraits

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The first 'portrait' can be found on the top floor of the Neues Museum in Berlin,<sup>1</sup> in the room which hosts the Berlin Gold Hat, a visually striking artefact dating from the Bronze Age (around 1000–800 BCE) (Menghin, 1999). There are only four such 'hats' in the world, all discovered in Germany and France. The Berlin Gold Hat is the best preserved of the four. It is conical in shape with a narrow rim, and measures two-thirds ↵ of a metre high; thus, an individual wearing it was immediately conspicuous. The cone is engraved with ornamental bands which puzzle researchers. Are these mythological symbols as such or do they indicate a way to understand and communicate with deities? There are no definitive answers, but scholars incline to the view that the Gold Hat is more likely to depict the ways in which knowledge was transmitted rather than being a religious symbol in its own right. Whatever the case, the decoration of the Gold Hat is clearly indicative of attempts to decipher and understand the world, activities which conferred authority on both the craftsmen who made the hat and the individual(s) (probably a priest or a deity) who wore it, and indeed to the community as a whole.

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Descending one floor the visitor to the Neues Museum will reach the Medieval Hall. Here a panel placed in the middle of the room displays a small silver coin, the 'Denarius of Charlemagne' produced around 800 CE.<sup>2</sup> The denarius shows the official portrait of King Karl the Great, widely known by his French nickname Charlemagne (r. 768–814). On Christmas Day 800, in Rome, Pope Leo III (795–816) crowned Charlemagne as 'Emperor of the Romans'. The detail on the coin repays attention: the portrait includes the Latin inscription 'Karolus Imp Aug' (*Karolus Imperator Augustus*); the reverse side shows what seems to be a temple (or church or mausoleum) with a cross in the middle and an inscription 'xpictiana religio' (the Christian faith), written partly in Greek. It is unclear if the denarius was issued to be widely circulated in the Frankish Empire or to be sent to Jerusalem to support Christian communities under Muslim rule in the Middle East. What is certain, however, is that the Christian cross and the words on the reverse side of the coin reveal that Charlemagne saw the Christian religion as playing a key role in his rise to power, coronation, and recognition. In addition, the denarius reflected Europe as a geographical unity: the inclusion of the Greek language, which was spoken in the eastern part of the continent, strengthens the idea that the depiction of the temple was a Byzantine stylization of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, one of the most sacred places in Christianity (Fried, 2016: 443–4). Thus, the coin linked the eastern and western regions of Europe with the birth of Christianity in the Middle East.

Taking the two artefacts together leads—inevitably—to the possible connections between the earliest expressions of knowledge in the Bronze Age and the role played by religion in the geographical and institutional framing of medieval Europe. Clearly religion is as much about the human condition and the possibility of an afterlife as it is about the shaping of Europe as a geographical entity encompassing both east and west. It is equally likely that the links between the two can be found, at least in part, in the circulation of ideas, in the rise and fall of rulers, empires and states, and in the evolution of Christianity—  
p. 3 alongside Judaism and Islam—as a world religion. In short, the ↵ interconnections of secular and sacred have shaped the concept of Europe from its earliest iterations until today.

The third 'portrait'—in this case, two paintings—are located in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, to be more precise, in the corridor which accommodates the Giovio Collection established in 1587.<sup>3</sup> The collection, which displays a significant number from the total of 484 paintings, is a veritable encyclopaedia of leading figures in the arts, theology, military, and politics across Europe in the sixteenth century (Zimmermann, 1995). Notably, these were paintings commissioned to be displayed in public as examples of individuals who defined European civilization, and thus, the European continent as a whole. The position of two paintings is particularly striking: the first is of Thomas Aquinas (1225–74), one of the most influential Catholic theologians and philosophers of all time; the second of Suleiman I, known as the Magnificent or the Lawgiver (r. 1520–66), the longest-reigning sultan of the Ottoman Empire whose troops besieged Vienna in

1529, and conquered territories in the Middle East and North Africa. The paintings face each other, as if highlighting the tension between religion or religions and the idea of Europe.

Is the placing of the two paintings a mere chance or is it an example of how religion and Europe were perceived at the time? What role did Christianity and Islam play in shaping state and power in Europe? To understand Europe is to understand the parallels between the 'golden age' of the Catholic Church and the 'golden age' of the Ottoman Empire. Religious and military conflicts shaped the fate of people living in Europe, in a world in which boundaries between east and west constantly fluctuated. Europe was not only a geographical entity but more importantly a 'universe' shaped by profound and enduring ideas ranging from Aristotle, as discovered in the work of Aquinas, to Suleiman's legal code which brought together the laws issued by all sultans in a set of reforms which lasted hundreds of years beyond his death.

The fourth 'portrait' involves a visit to a very different museum, this time to the House of European History, in Brussels, a building opened in 2017 with financial support from the European Parliament. The museum hosts a permanent exhibition focusing on key events in Europe since the French Revolution. Emerging from the various thematic sections—'Shaping Europe', 'Europe: A Global Power', 'Europe in Ruins', 'Rebuilding a Divided Continent', 'Shattering Certainties', and 'Accolades and Criticism'—most visitors will note, and probably take for granted, that the concept of religion is largely absent. Only the most attentive will have discovered a small carved statue of Saint Martin of Tours, taken from St Martin's Church in Utrecht in the Netherlands, and displayed as an example of the 'European values, traditions and culture [which] still reflect this long Christian heritage'.<sup>4</sup> The statue is exhibited alongside Diderot's and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*, present to embody the Enlightenment with its emphasis on 'the value of reason and rational thinking'.<sup>5</sup> The subtext is clear: religion is of little significance in modern Europe, displaced in the last two centuries by the process of secularization and the emergence of the secular state. Religion may well persist in its private forms, but is limited in its public expression.

To a certain extent this is true, but it is not the whole truth. The following chapters—and particularly those that relate to the more recent decades—will reveal a more nuanced picture that, to an extent, reverses earlier expectations. In parts of Europe (for the most part the North and the West), secularization is sufficiently advanced to erode the place of religion in the private as well as the public sphere; at the same time, growing diversity has ensured that religion is more rather than less present in public debate than it used to be. Exploring this largely unexpected paradox becomes a key theme in the later sections of the *Handbook*.



# Methods, theories, and approaches to the study of religion and Europe

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The four portraits discussed above offer snapshots of the evolution of religion and the idea of Europe over many centuries. The timeline, it is clear, is a long one—more than two millennia overall. Equally demanding is the size of the canvas. Europe is more, much more, than the European Union (EU); it is a geographical entity covering an area of 10,180,000 km<sup>2</sup>, comprising the territory from Iceland in the west to the Ural Mountains in the east, and from the Svalbard archipelago in Norway in the north to Malta and Cyprus in the south. In 2020, its total population was a little under 750 million, who live in a wide variety of internationally recognized and unrecognized states, dependencies, and principalities (see Appendix Tables 1 and 2, pp. 793–7, for the complete list). For obvious reasons, the western ‘edge’ of Europe is easier to define than its eastern equivalent. Regarding the latter, the *Handbook* aims to be as comprehensive as possible; hence the decision to include chapters on Ukraine and Russia on the one hand and Turkey on the other, and to pay attention to peripheries, notably the South Caucasus. All of the above, large parts of which are located in Asia rather than Europe, have been directly influenced by close links to Europe and European religion; the reverse is also the case.

From 2017 on, a diverse and variously skilled team of scholars was assembled to tackle the task. Simply a glance at the overall list (see List of Contributors section) is enough to reveal their range in terms of provenance, disciplinarity, and background. Regarding the editors, for example, Grace Davie is a British sociologist and has published extensively on religion in both Britain and Western Europe (see in particular Davie, 2000 and 2002); ↵ Lucian N. Leustean is a Romanian-born political scientist and a specialist on Orthodoxy and East Europe (Leustean, 2014a and 2014b). Among the many contributors, a large proportion, unsurprisingly, are European and know first-hand the locations and issues about which they write. A number, however, come from the United States or Canada. Their combined disciplinary backgrounds extend from history, through many branches of the social sciences to law, and include both area studies and specialist interests such as Judaica. A significant minority are skilled in theology or religious studies and yet others are practitioners, in the sense of being actively engaged in the debate—regarding, for example, the place of religion in the machinery of the EU. Each discipline brings with it a distinctive repertoire of methods involving quantitative and qualitative approaches, macro and micro analyses, insider and outsider accounts, longitudinal trends, and careful comparison.

Such variety notwithstanding, each and every author writes with sensitivity about religion and religious issues, seeing faith and faith commitments as an essential feature of human living, both individual and collective, but avoiding truth claims of any kind. Religion is not defined as such; it is, rather, approached as a lived, situated, and constantly evolving reality demanding close and careful scrutiny. Without doubt, it is a powerful force that at times bestows great benefits on individuals and the communities in which they live; equally, it can be deeply destructive of both people and places. Either way it is central to the European story.

No single method, theory, or theoretical approach drives the volume as a whole.<sup>6</sup> That said—and given that the beginnings of social science were to a large extent motivated by the upheavals taking place in Europe, as its constituent nations embarked, each in their own way, on the industrialization process—the ‘founding fathers’ (*sic*) of these disciplines, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber, offer a starting point. Clearly, the thinking of Karl Marx is central to the political narrative in many parts of the continent—not least in the vulgarizations of later Marxists and the regimes they inhabited. By the mid-twentieth century, not only the Soviet Union but much of East and Central Europe were dominated by a political class motivated by crude and not always accurate understandings of Marxist thinking, who determined that the only way to reveal the real injustices of society was to destroy—sometimes with hideous consequences—the religious component of society. This was a hostile environment in every sense of the term. It is equally plain that the argument in other chapters draws, both explicitly and implicitly, on Emile Durkheim in recognizing

the role of religion in binding society together, leading to pertinent questions about how this coherence will be achieved as religion either fades from the picture or becomes, in itself, a divisive element. The binding function of religion can, moreover, be deployed negatively: to exclude as well as include—a feature of European societies that has become more rather than less evident in recent decades.

p. 6 It is Max Weber, however, who supplies what might be termed a *fil rouge* for the *Handbook* in three critical insights, all of which derive from the conviction that religion can be constituted as something other than, or separate from, society or ‘the world’ (Weber, 1963). The three are analytically distinct but interrelated. First, is the insistence that the relationship between religion and the world is contingent and variable: it follows that the ways in which a particular religion relates to the surrounding context will be different in different places and will change over time. Second, this relationship can only be examined in its historical and cultural specificity; thus, documenting the details of these relationships becomes a central and necessarily demanding task of a scholar of religion. Third, Weber observed that the relationship between the two spheres, religion and society, is changing in nature as societies become more modern. This shift, to the point where the religious factor is ceasing to be an effective force in society, lies at the heart of what Weber termed ‘disenchantment’, the outcome of the process of secularization. Chapter after chapter in this volume offers rich illustrations of all three of these statements—the detail is varied, but the principles remain the same.

One further insight is important: the observation that the content or substance of a particular religion, or—as Weber put it—a ‘religious ethic’ is an independent variable in the sense that it influences the ways in which people behave, both individually and collectively, a theme that resonates powerfully not only in Max Weber’s own work, but in recent thinking in international relations (see Siedentop, 2017; Philpott, 2018; and Montgomery and Chirot, 2018). It follows that the complex relationship between a set of religious beliefs and the particular social stratum which becomes the principal carrier of these beliefs in any given society requires close and careful scrutiny. Weber’s celebrated analysis of the Protestant ethic should be seen in this light (Weber, 1965). It is, however, but one example of a more general theme which is depicted in many different places in the pages that follow.

The centrality of secularization to the development of modern Europe has already been noted. A number of caveats must now be introduced. Whilst Europe is correctly recognized as one of the most secular parts of the world, the process by which this has occurred is neither inevitable, nor linear. For a start, parts of Europe (notably the North and West) are much more secular than others, but even within these ‘blocs’ there are wide variations between countries, even adjacent ones. Consider, for example, the difference between the noticeably secular Czech Republic and persistently Catholic Poland. In addition, there is no longer an expectation that the rest of the world will follow Europe’s albeit patchy ‘example’ (Davie, 2002; Berger, Davie, and Fokas, 2008). The Iranian Revolution of 1979, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, and the wake-up call of 9/11 in 2001 brought the motivating power of religion to the fore in unexpected ways. More important still, however, is the striking fact that well over 80 per cent of the global population continues to claim some sort of religious affiliation, a percentage that is likely to rise rather than fall in the coming decades (Pew Research Center, 2012 and 2017).

p. 7 New thinking—and for some scholars, a new terminology—is beginning to develop in response to these trends both in Europe and beyond. The term ‘post-secular’, for example, has moved centre-stage following a series of interventions by Jürgen ↳ Habermas—one of Europe’s most distinguished philosophers—notably an address following the award of the Holberg prize in 2005.<sup>7</sup> Habermas’ lecture ‘Religion in the Public Sphere’ began thus: ‘We can hardly fail to notice the fact that religious traditions and communities of faith have gained a new, hitherto unexpected political importance.’ It continues: ‘The fact is at least unexpected for those of us who followed the conventional wisdom of mainstream social science and assumed that modernization inevitably goes hand in hand with secularization in the sense of a diminishing influence of religious beliefs and practices on politics and society at large’ (Habermas, 2005: 2). In short,

religion has reappeared as a political force; this was not expected to happen; and the reason for the unexpectedness was the confident assertions of mainstream social science, which assumed that the processes of modernization and secularization were concomitant.

A more developed intervention can be found in a cogently argued article published in the *European Journal of Philosophy*, which addresses the idea of the post-secular in terms of John Rawls' celebrated concept, the 'public use of reason' (Habermas, 2006: 3). The key question is easily stated: what forms of discourse can or cannot be included in public discussion? The answer that emerges is provocative: Habermas asks of secular citizens, including Europeans, 'a self-reflective transcending of the secularist self-understanding of Modernity' (Habermas, 2006: 15)—an attitude that quite clearly goes beyond 'mere tolerance' in that it necessarily engenders feelings of respect for the worldview of the religious person. There is in fact a growing reciprocity in the argument. Historically, religious citizens had to adapt to an increasingly secular environment in order to survive at all. Secular citizens were better placed in that they avoided, almost by definition, 'cognitive dissonances' in the modern secular state. It is this imbalance that requires adjustment as religion and religious actors become increasingly prominent in the public sphere.

Habermas' claims are challenging in every sense of the term and merit very careful reflection. They constitute an innovative response to the growing presence of religion in most, if not all global regions and its penetration into Europe, brought there by immigration. Unsurprisingly his interventions have provoked a lively debate much of which goes beyond the limits of this introduction (see for example Calhoun, Mendieta, and VanAntwerpen, 2013). The contributions of two scholars—Hans Joas and David Martin—are, however, not only central in themselves but inform very directly the approach embodied in this *Handbook*.

Hans Joas has written extensively in this field, in a body of work that interrogates the connections between modernization and secularization. In the course of this enquiry he pays close attention to the imprecise use of both these concepts, noting in particular up to seven different meanings of the term 'secular' (Joas, 2002; Joas and Wiegandt, 2009). Such complexities, he argues, must be squarely faced. It is in working through them that a better understanding of late modern society will emerge, not in an exaggerated contrast between an oversimplified, and thus distorting, understanding of either the secular or post-secular. David Martin argues similarly in a discussion that draws on five decades of scholarship. As early as the 1960s, Martin urged caution regarding the idea of secularization, underlining the manifest confusions surrounding this term, not to mention its ideological overtones. Some fifty years later, he advised similar prudence with respect to the post-secular, fearing that the same confusions might happen again. Specifically, he affirms the persistence rather than the resurgence of religion, including its presence in public debate—for which reason he questions the notion (the idea itself) of privatization. Is this the correct word to describe what has happened even in Europe (Martin, 2011: 6–7)? Much of the evidence suggests otherwise. The interactions of the religious and the secular should rather be seen in the long term. 'Religious thrusts' and 'secular recoils' have happened for centuries rather than decades and—crucially for Martin—they work themselves out differently in different places. This is as true in Europe as it is elsewhere. For example, the peak of churchgoing in Europe comes in the late nineteenth century as a reaction to the ravages of revolution (Blaschke, 2002).

David Martin—to whose memory this volume is dedicated—has influenced the thinking of both editors over many years. His work on secularization has been seminal to scholarly debate (see Chapter 15). His analyses of the tensions between church and state are part and parcel of the same discussion and will be referenced below (see section on Cross-cutting themes).

## Structure and contents

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More immediately, it is important to lay out the structure (five parts) and contents (forty-five self-contained chapters and a statistical appendix) that make up this *Handbook*.<sup>8</sup>

Part I, 'Religion and the Making of Europe' (Chapters 2–9), introduces the building blocks of European religion and the role that they played in the formation of the continent. These chapters should not be seen as a definitive or comprehensive history of religion in Europe; their aim, rather, is to capture key moments in the evolution of the continent and the place of religion in these. The analysis starts with Antiquity in a chapter that describes both the polytheistic systems of Greek and Roman religions and the beginnings of Jewish and Christian monotheism, which bit by bit became the mainstream of medieval and modern Europe. In the West, the medieval Catholic Church was overwhelmingly dominant; it also evolved. As described in Chapter 3, almost everything about the religion changed over the course of the Middle Ages, yet the fluctuations occurred within well-established patterns and principles that remained constant. The discussion on the Byzantine Empire that follows examines the model of church–state relations found in the Orthodox Church, seeing this as the primary creator of culture in Eastern Europe. Chapter 5 recognizes the religious diversity already present in Europe, notably the intricate relationships—a triangular encounter—between Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.

Chapters 6 to 9 move the narrative on, beginning with a multidimensional (theological, political, religious, and social) analysis of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. The chapters on the Enlightenment, revolution, and nationalism bring together the rise of the modern nation-state and the challenges posed by modernity to private and public forms of religion. Political modernism, cultural and scientific progress went hand in hand with the separation between religious and state structures. At the same time, Europe became increasingly divided along national lines endorsing the idea of a nation built on confessionalism. The territoriality of religion in Europe is central to this discussion.

Part II, entitled 'Religion, Ideology, and Modernity in Europe' (Chapters 10–15), probes the relationship between religious communities and ideologies in the twentieth century—connections that play out very differently in East and West. It starts by examining the challenges posed by dictatorship in the interwar period, paying particular attention to Germany and Italy, and the subsequent mobilization of Christian democratic parties in the reconstruction of Western Europe after 1945. Chapter 12 presents the religious Cold War (1945–89) as a diverse, complex, and global phenomenon whose salience in different parts of Europe varied according to the stage of the conflict and the pressures of local and national dynamics. Chapter 13 considers the contrasting ways in which both religion and Europe have changed since the fall of the Iron Curtain. Chapters 14 and 15 are rather different. The first advances a typology of religion–state relations across Europe and the ways in which religious and political authorities engage with issues of faith, conviction and religion. The second on secularity and secularization brings the section on religion, ideologies and modernity to a close; at the same time, it establishes the context for the material that follows, asking to what extent and in what ways modern Europe has, or has not, become secular.

Part III, 'Religious Dialogue, Public Policy, and International Institutions in Europe' (Chapters 16–24), covers the role of religion in the construction of the EU from the end of the Second World War until the present time. It combines an historical overview with public policy insights to depict the ways in which religion influences decision-making processes in the corridors of power in Brussels and Strasbourg. The first two chapters focus on the political mobilization of religion (Chapter 16), and its place in the legal systems of the European institutions (Chapter 17). The following two examine the engagement with religious and convictional issues on the part of the European Parliament (Chapter 18) and the European External Action Service (Chapter 19) in the light of Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) introduced by the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon, which institutionalized 'an open, regular

and transparent dialogue' between the EU institutions and a wide variety of religious and non-religious organizations. An important sub-theme emerges at this point: that in the post-war period theories and thinking about European integration largely avoided religion, seeing this as a controversial topic which deepened the division between East and West. Only after the fall of communism, and Jacques Delors' innovative presidency of the European Commission (1985–95) did the dialogue become more positive.

Chapters 20 and 21 present this conversation from the perspective of two of the most influential religious bodies in Brussels: the Conference of European Churches (CEC), and the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE). These chapters are written by practitioners affiliated with these organizations and take into account the religiously grounded values that shape their engagement with political partners. The final contributions (Chapters 22, 23, and 24) address key international organizations: the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE), the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), and the United Nations (UN). Cutting across these chapters are issues relating to the freedom of religion and belief: for example, the 2019 OSCE document entitled *Freedom of Religion or Belief and Security: Policy Guidance*; the protections granted by the European Court under Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights; and the work of the Geneva-based office of the United Nations on religious freedom, seeing this as a core value of the UN.

Part IV, entitled 'Religious Diversity, World Religions, and the Idea of Europe' (Chapters 25–32), looks at the relationship between the major world religions and the concept of Europe. Unsurprisingly, its main focus is on Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Islam, and Judaism, but it also includes a chapter on Eastern religions as they both perceive and are perceived by Europeans. Each author in this section provides an overview of how the idea of Europe has been interpreted in the religion in question, drawing on key writings, actors, and rituals in both the institutionalized forms of religion and the lived experiences of the faithful. Early differences in Catholic and Protestant approaches to Europe continue to resonate—strikingly with regard to European integration. With respect to Orthodoxy, internal differences are as important as its overall distinctiveness: anti-Europeanism (and anti-Westernism) and Europhilism are both in evidence. In terms of minorities, Jews have been present in the region since Roman times, and Muslims since the early eighth century. Both raised the question of diversity at an early stage in the development of Europe, debates which have intensified in recent years (Goodman, 2019; Cesari, 2015).

The final chapters of this part (31 and 32) focus on the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Chapter 31 on non-religion draws attention to the growing number of Europeans (especially among younger generations) who place themselves outside formal religion altogether, recognizing that the proportions vary considerably from country to country. Chapter 32 brings together the following themes: the waning of Christianity, itself a sign of growing secularization, and increasing levels of religious diversity brought about by rising levels of in-migration. As a result, all European states confront the same broad question: how to adapt existing church–state relations and norms of secularism to an extra-Christian religious diversity on a scale that has not been known before.

p. 11 Part V, entitled 'Religious Geography, Society and Politics in Europe' (Chapters 33–45), offers an analysis of the nation-states of Europe, either singly or in clusters, arranged alphabetically apart from the final chapter on 'Peripheries'. Each author covers similar ground which 'brings to life' the historical and ideological themes set out in earlier sections. Country by country, the story unfolds through many centuries (and in some cases millennia) as each nation-state gradually established and then modified its religious settlement. Close attention is paid to recent developments as many, if not all, of these countries deal with the challenges outlined at the end of Part IV: that is the fading of a historically dominant Christian narrative, accelerating secularization, and growing religious diversity. Each case study contains a selective bibliography drawing on publications in English and the relevant national language(s).

The *Handbook* concludes with a short Appendix which takes the form of ‘A Statistical Summary’. Among other things this defines the limits, inclusions and exclusions of the territories that are considered part of Europe. Most, but not quite all of these are included in Part V.<sup>9</sup>

## Cross-cutting themes

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A number of cross-cutting themes emerge from these analyses. In this section, the following threads are considered: the place of religion in the circulation of knowledge and ideas; the tensions between Europe as a whole and its constituent nation-states; the marked differences between social strata, gender groups, generations, and ethnicities in their relationships with religion; and the difficult questions posed by rapidly growing religious diversity. What follows should not, however, be seen as an exhaustive account. Indeed, using the Index as a guide, the reader may well find further opportunities for comparison: noting both similarities and differences in regional clusters, confessional groups and individual countries, or in relating particular themes to particular nation-states. In a short conclusion to the chapter as a whole, a series of recent, and largely unexpected, events will be highlighted, revealing an awareness right across Europe that the narrative set out in these pages will continue in the present century, but in ways that are not easy to anticipate.

p. 12

From the time of Antiquity onwards, religions and religious organization have both advanced and impeded the exchange of ideas in Europe. In terms of advancement, good examples can be found in the spread of classical mathematics via Eastern Orthodoxy in Byzantium, via Muslims in Spain and both Orthodox and Muslims in Sicily (Kaunszer, 1987). The importance of translation is referenced in Chapter 5. ↪ More generally the Toledo School of Translators, working in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, translated Arabic texts into Latin, thereby introducing the knowledge of ancient Greek philosophers and scientists from Byzantium, the Middle East and Central Asia to Western scholars.

Much more negative was the clash between the Latin West and Orthodox East, evidenced in the burning of the Imperial Library of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade in 1204 (Harris, 1999). A further example can be found in the ruthless suppression of new or different ways of thinking in both the medieval and early modern period (see Chapters 3 and 6). That said, a final paradox is worth noting: it was wars of *religion* that not only provoked but shaped the modern international system following the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.

The territorial nature of European religion and the tensions that derive from it are—and always have been—pivotal. In his celebrated *A General Theory of Secularization*, David Martin writes:

Europe is a unity by virtue of having possessed one Caesar and one God i.e. by virtue of Rome. It is a diversity by virtue of the existence of nations. The patterns of European religion derive from the tension and the partnership between Caesar and God, and from the relationship between religion and the search for national integrity and identity.

(Martin, 1978: 100)

The connections captured in this quotation appear in this *Handbook* in multiple forms. They include the ebb and flow between the secular and religious over two millennia; the gradual emergence of the nation-state as the dominant form of political life in Europe; the roles of religion (notably Protestantism and Orthodoxy) in this process; the significance of religion in the building of post-war integration (encouraged in particular by prominent Catholics); and—in recent decades—the deployment of religious rhetoric on the part of populist parties, in their hostility to Europe on the one hand, and to immigration (notably Muslims) on the other.

To appreciate these tensions fully, they should be placed in a broader perspective. As Martin himself observed, the ways in which religion inserts itself into society is a global rather than a European phenomenon. The line runs from ‘transnational voluntarism’ at one end of the spectrum to the forms of religion which are based on a closed market, and which regard certain territories as their own, at the other (Martin, 2013: 185). Europe lies towards the latter end of the spectrum in so far as its historic churches are organized by territory at every level of ecclesiastical life (nation, diocese, and parish). Europe, however, is a part of the world where the freedoms of both religion and non-religion are enshrined in law as well as custom.

p. 13 The combination is difficult to manage: growing diversity challenges the inherited model, the more so where the connections between ethnic and national identity endure. In the Orthodox East, for example, the historic churches remain strong, but the space for religious minorities (both Christian and other) is limited (Leustean, 2014b). The issue presents in different ways in different places, running from constitutional imbalance at one end of the spectrum,<sup>10</sup> to the almost unimaginable violence of the Yugoslav wars at the other (see Chapter 13). A rather different formula is gathering speed in the West. Here European citizens increasingly see religion as a choice rather than a given: regardless of place they opt in rather than out of the possibilities on offer, be they religious or secular. Faith for these individuals, following Charles Taylor, is simply ‘one human possibility among others’ (Taylor, 2007: 3)—a shift with profound implications for Europe’s future.

Weber’s insight into the links between a religious ethic and the social stratum that ‘carries’ this has already been introduced. Some hundred years after Weber’s initial formulation, a wider range of social actors must be taken into account. Take, for example, the difference between men and women in their engagements with religion. References to the role of women in the religious life of Europe are—it has to be said—episodic rather than systematic in the chapters that follow, but their importance is noted in the medieval period (Chapter 3) and at the time of the Reformation (Chapter 6). In both cases informal roles are as significant as official positions. Analyses of secularization in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Chapter 15) reveal very clearly the gendered nature of religious change: women are less ready than men to abandon their commitments to religion, a finding which holds in almost all branches of the Christian Church. Rather differently, Chapter 29 on Judaism draws attention to influential female voices in the moulding of modern Jewish life in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Differences in gender persist across generations. In late modern Europe, however, each generation is less religious than the last, and as Chapter 31 explains, younger Europeans are embracing nonreligion in considerable numbers—a trend unlikely to reverse. Who then will take responsibility for the religious ethic (or more accurately ethics) that have formed and shaped Europe over two millennia? The question is a real one.

It will be posed, moreover, in a Europe that is evolving visibly in terms of its demographic make-up, raising issues of conceptualization as much as demographic change per se. In the later chapters of the *Handbook* much will be said about new arrivals from outside Europe, an increasingly significant section of the European population (see also the statistical summary in the Appendix). In the early post-war period, such individuals were largely categorized in terms of ethnicity or country of origin, in other words in secular rather than religious terms. Towards the end of the twentieth century the debate shifted: religious terminology became increasingly prevalent as incomers to the UK, France, or Germany (say) became Muslims rather than Pakistanis, Algerians, or Turks. How to sustain a Muslim ethic in Europe becomes, moreover, a primary task of this constituency (see Chapter 28, and Cesari, 2015).

p. 14 A satisfactory answer will require new forms of dialogue at every level of society—European as well as national. This will include the organizations introduced in Part III and their role—or roles—in the management of difference, first between different groups of Christians and more recently between



representatives of different faiths. It will also require what is sometimes termed ‘street-level ecumenism’: that is the capacity of ‘ordinary’ Europeans to live together in ways that embrace rather than tolerate diversity. See Davie *et al.* (2018), who note in addition that religions can be peace-makers as well as instigators of violence. That is as true in Europe (see Chapter 37 on Northern Ireland) as it is elsewhere.

## Conclusion: a continuing narrative

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This introduction began with four portraits which indicated the time-line covered by this *Handbook*, from earliest Antiquity to the twenty-first century. The case studies gathered in the final section almost all conclude with a snapshot of the present moment. Taken together these accounts convey an impression of unease. The nation-states of Europe appear uncertain about the future and their capacities to deal well with increasing diversity on the one hand and outbursts of populism on the other. Both have undermined earlier expectations that secularization would lead necessarily to an acceptance of difference and growing toleration (Roy, 2010). Decreasing levels of religious literacy simply make things more difficult.

Put differently, Pope John Paul II’s claim that Europe has two lungs (East and West) and the widespread support for religious resistance during the Cold War period no longer command attention. The current mood is darker as Europe confronts new challenges. These include: the 2008 recession, the 2015 migration crisis triggered by unceasing violence in the Middle East (and beyond), and one year later the episode known as Brexit and all that this implied not only for the EU but for Europe as a whole. Equally disturbing has been the increasingly assertive presence of Russia as a competitor to the liberal West; not least its incursions into Ukraine in 2014. At the time of writing (October 2020), the Russian ‘near-abroad’—Belarus and the North Caucasus for example—remains markedly unstable.

Less specific to Europe but present nonetheless are angry debates about gender and sexualities (the Me-Too movement), potentially violent challenges regarding race and colonization (Black Lives Matter), and a growing urgency about climate change. Most immediate of all, however, has been the arrival into Europe of the COVID-19 pandemic in January 2020, which spread across the continent at alarming speed raising the levels of anxiety higher still. The pandemic emerged at a relatively late stage in the preparation of this *Handbook*, but the implications for Europe, its constituent nation-states and the religious communities within these, have been immense as borders closed and lockdowns started. The former redefined Schengen; the latter spared no one: religious organizations—like their secular equivalents—closed their doors to the faithful and indeed to everyone else raising profound questions about their place in society. Rather more positively, many congregations, whether large or small, Christian or other, found new ways to respond to the virus, including online liturgies, innovative forms of pastoral care, and much appreciated practical support.

The future is difficult to predict. Though diminished in many ways, religion in Europe will not only persist, but continue to play a significant role in the region’s future. Understanding its potential for both good and ill in the coming decades requires the fullest possible knowledge of its past. To provide such knowledge is the goal of this *Handbook*.



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## Notes

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- 1 Neues Museum, Berlin, available at <https://www.smb.museum/en/museums-institutions/neues-museum/collections-research/about-the-collection/>.
- 2 The Numismatic Collection (Münzkabinett) of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin indicates that the denarius of Charlemagne was in circulation around 813–4 CE: <https://ikmk.smb.museum/object?lang=en&id=18202748>.
- 3 The original collection, which has not survived intact, was housed in a specially-built museum on the shore of Lake Como. A set of copies painstakingly made for Cosimo 1 de' Medici (1519–74) by Cristofano dell'Altissimo has been displayed in the First Corridor of the Uffizi since 1587.
- 4 'Shaping Europe'. House of European History, Brussels, available at <https://historia-europa.ep.eu/en/permanent-exhibition/shaping-europe>
- 5 The *Encyclopédie*, in full *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, was published between 1751 and 1772. It is considered one of the principal works of the Philosophes, a group of men dedicated to the advancement of science and secular thought.
- 6 For a detailed discussion of both method and theory in the study of religion, see Stausberg and Engler, 2011 and 2016.
- 7 See <https://holbergprisen.no/en/holberg-symposium-2005-j-r-gen-habermas-religion-public-sphere> for the details of the symposium that took place on this occasion. Professor Habermas' lecture can be downloaded in full.
- 8 Apart from Chapter 1, other chapters are not cross-referenced. Each one can be read or consulted independently of the others.
- 9 For further information about those which are not, see Johnson and Grim, 2020.
- 10 Note for example the prohibition on proselytizing in Article 13, Clause 2 of the Greek constitution, which has been challenged in the European Court of Human Rights. See *Kokkinakis v. Greece*, 25 May 1993, European Court of Human Rights, Application No. 14307/88. More details available at: [https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22itemid%22:\[%22001-57827%22\]}](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22itemid%22:[%22001-57827%22]}).

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CHAPTER

## 2 Religion and Classical Europe, Twelfth Century bce–600 ce

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### Abstract

In a history of religion and Europe classical Antiquity is both an example of difference, that is, the polytheistic systems of Greek and Roman religions, and the beginnings of the monotheistic religions, which became the mainstream in medieval and modern Europe. Drawing on the rituals, symbols, and patterns of polytheism as the legacy of the palace cultures in the Ancient Near East and Greece (until 1200 BC), the city-states (*poleis*) adapted these to non-autocratic societies (*polis*-religion). In the empires of Hellenism and the Roman Empire itself, religions were not part of a power structure (e.g. a ruler-cult). Rather their urban character allowed a plural neighbourhood, in which the monotheistic religions were well integrated. In late Antiquity a long transformation formed the Middle Ages, when with the rise of Islam the Mediterranean became divided into three parts: the Islamic south, Greek Orthodoxy in the east, and Latin-speaking 'Europe' in the north-west.

**Keywords:** Classical Antiquity, polytheistic religion, ruler-cult, monotheism, polis-religion, urban plurality, transformation, late Antiquity

**Subject:** History of Religion, Religion

**Series:** Oxford Handbooks

THE concepts used in the title of this chapter require an explanation. First, in this case, and unlike many, if not all, of the following chapters, 'Europe' does not denote Western and Central 'Latin' Europe (Auffarth, 2014). Until the English victory over the Spanish Armada in 1588, the Mediterranean Sea constituted a central region of interaction, connecting Southern Europe, Western Asia, and Northern Africa, rather than acting as a barrier. Second, the period under scrutiny in this chapter begins with the flourishing of the Bronze Age civilizations in the Ancient Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean. After their collapse around 1200 BCE, the network of interaction slowly drifted to the West, including the Western part of the Mediterranean basin, from Persia to Spain and from Nubia to Britain. In the epoch of Hellenism (330–31 BCE) empires lumped together various civilizations under one ruler, for example Persia and Macedonia under Alexander the Great (r. 336–323 BCE), Carthage and Italy under Hannibal (d. 183/181 BCE), and Egypt and Rome under Julius Caesar (r. 81–44 BCE) and Cleopatra VII Philopator (r. 51–30 BCE). Cults were

exchanged and replicated. The Roman Empire developed global structures—these were political and economic such as taxes, commerce, institutionalized food supply for the mega-cities, highways, and armies cross-posted to defend the *limes* (fortified borders), but also cultural such as a system of education based on texts regarded as ‘classical’/canonical or on aesthetic conventions.

p. 20 In this framework, not only were cults exchanged across cultures, but religion experienced a deep transformation, coming to be seen as a civilizing power, as knowledge to be acquired, as the basis for a civic ethics of loyalty, with a shift from public to more individual performance. Religion thus becomes less the observance of cults and rituals at a local level, and more a type/pattern of behaviour corresponding to a stratified society, especially in cities. In the cities, forms of religiosity, such as Classical Greek and Roman religions, Judaism, and Christianity developed, which looked with contempt on the villagers’ cults (the cults of the so-called *pagani*). With the decline of the *Pax Romana*, the security and the enforced stability of global structures of power broke apart into self-contained regional and local kingdoms, in which, due to the lack of secular rule, Christian bishops took over the provision of food supplies, care for the poor and sick, education, and libraries. The religious landscape of the late antique West consisted of a mosaic of different micro-Christianities, alongside which practices were performed which are difficult to ascribe to a specific religion. The development of the Merovingian dynasty and the rise of Islam can be described as signalling the beginning of a new world order; however, both are rooted, to varying degrees, in late antique cultures and transmitted elements of it to the Middle Ages. Thus around 650 the Mediterranean was divided into the (Greek Christian) Eastern Roman Empire in the east, the Latin Christianities in the north-west, and Islamic rule in the southern Mediterranean and Near East.

To inquire into ‘classical’ Europe and ‘classical’ Antiquity means to narrow the focus down to the Greek and Roman cultures, which are included in the classical canon of middle and higher (humanistic) education which dominated Western European education at least until the twentieth century. This educational ideal emphasized the mastery of Latin and Greek as the linguistic basis of elite (Latin: *classis*) formation, referred to Aristotle for learning logic, to the Stoic responsibility ethics for philosophy, and to the ancient marble statues for the aesthetics of fine arts. Ancient masterpieces were considered to be the benchmarks for modern culture; they gained new emphasis during the various renaissances of European history (the Carolingian and the twelfth-century renaissances, the Trecento, the German Renaissance, Neo-Stoicism, and Neo-Humanism) and formed the fundament for higher education, not least for theologians—sometimes in opposition to the dominant Christian culture and censorship. Therefore, ‘classical’ Antiquity is rooted in a specific cultural context with clear normative implications.

Before narrowing the focus to classical Antiquity, therefore, its ‘non-classical’ context has to be taken into account. That is the Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Hittite, and Syrian civilizations as the basis and framework in which Greek and Roman civilizations were formed and whose legacy they passed on; and the Babylonians and Assyrians, succeeded after 550 by the Persian Empire, the later Egyptians, Phoenicians and Carthaginians, the Etruscans, and the whole *Barbaria* at the margins—that is, Arabs, Scythians, Slavonic people, Celts, Germans, Anglo-Saxons, Irish people, and Iberians, among others.

## Contexts: ‘classical Europe’ and Mediterranean religions

As early as the Bronze Age, we can detect attempts to order the otherworld symbolically by populating it with powerful personal entities, families, and sun-gods—heralds who deliver directives to humans, and so on. These endeavours amount to what we call ‘polytheism’. The Bronze Age civilizations in the Ancient Near East established a close correspondence between the political order, structured by centralized palace civilisations and an irrigation economy, and the otherworldly order of the gods, modelling them one upon another. The Mediterranean Sea made it possible to transport rare and luxury goods by ships from the workshops to the palace and from there to other, more remote, palaces.

The metallurgy of bronze (a leading technology in the Bronze Age) requires, besides copper, which is found in many places, an amount of tin, which is found nowhere in the Mediterranean but only as far away as Afghanistan. Bronze was in great demand in every civilization of the Eastern Mediterranean and Near East, but it could not be produced and refined without tin. Together with the rare material and other cargo, other precious things were transported, such as amulets, statuettes of gods, scarabees, cylinder seals, and copies of products of fine arts and crafts to be reproduced by local workshops. In addition, a variety of individuals travelled around, such as artisans, singers of tales, ritual specialists, medical specialists, and, time and again, rulers with their families, who took part in celebrations of weddings, coronations, or jubilees, and brought gifts and daughters as tokens of friendship. At the same time, the taking of prisoners of war and the practice of deporting the elite of a nation obliged to pay tribute, also fostered the exchange of material culture, knowledge, and religion in the network of civilizations of the Eastern Mediterranean (Crete, Mycenae, Pylos, Ilion/Troia, Milet), Asia Minor (Hattuša/Hittites), Syria (Ugarit, Ebla, Megiddo), and the Ancient Near East by the great rivers in Mesopotamia (Babylonia, Ninive, Ur), and Egypt (Memphis, Thebes, the Minoan palace of Avaris). Since the Neolithic revolution, pioneers had developed techniques of seafaring which allowed for even long-distance travel on the risky and ‘corrupting sea’ (Horden and Purcell, 2000; Broodbank, 2013: 212–18). A commonwealth of palace cultures exchanged goods across the sea in the so-called ‘Aegean *Koiné*’ (in the middle of the second millennium BCE) with early Greece as ‘a culture on the fringes of the ancient Near East’ (Cancik, 2002: VI). A ‘common language’ (*Koine*) emerged consisting of cultural elements and patterns, given, bought, translated, and imitated both in a material, human, and cultural respect (Wittke, Olshausen, and Szydlak, 2010: 28; Cline, 2014).

p. 22 Concerning religion, the Aegean *Koiné* shared common types of god-persons, some in the shape of an animal, for example the bull which surpasses human strength, some as stars in heaven, but in pride of place were those in human shape (anthropomorphic): for example the weather-god with his bundle of thunderbolts, riding on the clouds; the blacksmith-god; the goddess eager for love, but not to be tamed by marriage and family; the smiting warrior; and the healing *Rešep*, who could, however, also shoot arrows of pestilence. The gods have their specific character, their realm (heaven, the underworld, the sea), and in their capriciousness they support their followers and penalize others unfairly; sometimes they regret their deeds. But in the end, the amoral gods have to obey this-worldly order and justice, hypostatized as the *Ma’at* in Egypt, as *Me* and *sedaqā* in Mesopotamia, and as *Dike* in Greek thought. A rare and special case is ‘the God’ in monotheism such as the Egyptian Amun—there is only one sun in heaven, consequently only one God (Auffarth, 2010a: 421–53).

Not only the conception of god-persons, but also the ordering of the ‘many gods’ of polytheism was accomplished in the Bronze Age, inter alia through a set of stories, which were told and written down in many versions all over the Aegean *Koiné* and survived the end of the palace civilizations. The plots include the creation of the habitable world by a creator god, who later resigned and handed over the government to a younger god (the distant and the near god); the creation of man and woman; and the re-creation after the world had been destroyed by a deluge, survived only by one man and his family. Other stories concern the impending chaos and the end of world, or the revolution and succession in heaven: a younger god tries to

dethrone the governing god. Either he fails and loses his position as prince and successor, or he succeeds, emasculates his father (in order to prevent the next revolution in heaven), and throws him into Gaol [sic]. In one version, the myth of the separation of men from god explains this as the result of a failed attempt by humans to become immortal by eating a fruit, which the god had forbidden. In another version, a trickster tries to cheat the gods in a shared meal by allocating the worst portion to the gods and reserving the better ones for men; this explains the uneven sharing of the sacrificial meal, which assigns bones, hide, and tail to the gods, and the meat to the human beings. Another myth tells how the heavenly gods plan to annihilate mankind, but men react by refusing to sacrifice. In the end gods are coerced by the threat of starvation into a treaty which guarantees the existence of human beings. Last but not least, the council of gods is established on a mountain in the north (Mt. Saphon in Ugarit; Mt. Olympus in Northern Greece) to discuss and decide issues of justice.

Rituals (such as sacrifices, prayers, or curses) and symbols (such as the house of god or temple, and the three levels of the world—heaven and earth where humans live, the sea, and the underworld of the chthonic deities and ancestors) developed in the Bronze Age and persisted into the Iron Age, the topic of the next section.

p. 23

## Religions of the *Poleis* ('City-States')

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### ***Polis* as a weak state for free individuals**

When the Bronze Age palaces collapsed around 1200 BCE, the Iron Age civilizations inherited their religious symbolism (West, 1997: 33–60; 276–333 on Hesiod; 334–401 on the *Iliad*; and 402–37 on the *Odyssey*), but transposed it into societies with a fundamentally different organization. To explain the collapse of the palaces, scholars point to external factors such as the raids of the 'sea people' all over the Eastern Mediterranean or earthquakes. But internal reasons may also have fostered the end: a revolution overturned their bureaucracy and monarchical system. In the civilizations along the great rivers, the Nile, the Euphrates, and the Tigris, the irrigation economy encouraged the perpetuation of hierarchical organization, but on the coasts of the Mediterranean, a new form of self-organization developed: voluntary associations in 'city-states', which were characterized by weak state structures, but greater freedom for the individual (see the classical texts of Fustel de Coulanges, 1864 and Weber, 1922 [1999]).

Around the coasts of the Mediterranean there were 1,035 *poleis* (Πόλις *polis*; *poleis* plural). An inventory, including issues of religion (Hansen, 2004; Wittke, Olshausen, and Szydlak, 2010: 68), reveals that they differed greatly in their internal organization. In Rome, kinship was still an important structure. Leading families, fostered by their clientele, sent the head of the clan to the senate (the council of the elder statesmen). A younger member could be elected as the executive minister acting as one of two *consules* for one year only. Sparta was characterized by a military *Männerbund*, rather than families; Spartan women, however, possessed great rights. In most *poleis* the assembly of free men gathered in plenary meetings (*ekklesia*) in the central place (*agorá*) and decided the upcoming issues. A citizen was obliged to defend the city by participation in military campaigns. A *polis* was economically self-contained, and it relied on the resources of the Mediterranean trias, wheat, wine, and olive oil, based on the semi-arid climate, with wet winters and long, hot summers. But the basis of a *polis* was the covenant of people, including men and women, seafarers and peasants, lazy young men riding on horses, while slaves produced their riches. In lean years, a *polis* could enter a ship and look for a place to dwell in better environmental conditions, which might be found at the mouth of rivers on the coast all over the Mediterranean. The Greek world consisted of many small *poleis*, which refused to subordinate themselves to bigger entities.



## Polis-religion

p. 24 This is true also for religion: there is not a single Greek religion, but the religions of many Greeks (Price, 1999). Herodotus, the historian of the fifth century, thought that the family resemblances between the religions of the Greeks (understood as people who spoke Greek and lived in *poleis*) were based on the shared 'sacred books', namely the two epic poems of 'Homer', the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and the lineage of the gods in Hesiod's *Theogony* (Herodotos, *Historiai*, 2: 53). Shortly after Homer and Hesiod, around the middle of the seventh century, Attic vases disseminated various myths connected with these epics throughout the Greek world: myths about the heroes in the war between Greeks and Trojans which mirrors the combat between the gods; myths about the risks of seafaring, clustering around the figure of Odysseus; and myths about the cultural 'other', such as the one-eyed Polyphemos and the Amazons. But unlike the Torah of the Jews, the New Testament of the Christians, or the Qur'an of the Muslims, the Greek epics are not considered to be sacred, as they do not canonize the words of God (revelation) to be remembered time and again as commandments, nor as instruction for rituals, nor as God's deeds in the salvation history of his chosen people (Parker, 2005, 2011: 1–39; Burkert, 1985. Eidinow and Kindt, 2015). Rather the Homeric epic is 'secular', but through its recitation the Greeks learned the fundamental values articulated in the heroic adventures and combats: for example, the necessity to care for the weak—such as widows and strangers, the notion that one is permitted to take back what a neighbour has taken away or to exact punishment for received injuries, but without overreacting and without turning victory into blind revenge (see Auffarth, 1991: 292–344 [the cultural other], 466–86 [care for weak people], 487–501 [revenge should be limited and a treaty prevents a circle of vendetta]). They also learned that gods will punish evildoers, and that men are not gods: indeed gods, constantly and jealously, will prevent men from living too well and living too long.

Myths were disseminated by singers, who travelled around to present their epics at festivals. Furthermore, one could encounter and recognize those myths (that of Polyphemos for example), in vase paintings, or in recitations, or by recognizing a famous verse inscribed on a vase. Reading and writing became an individual competence for whoever wanted to learn—in contrast to the Bronze Age palace cultures, where writing systems were restricted to a few authorized scribes. The Greeks (and also the Etruscans and Romans) learned writing systems twice from the Orient: the first time in the Bronze Age, and the second time in the very early Iron Age (eighth century). This was the twenty-six-letter alphabetic writing, which was transmitted from Syria/Phoenicia via Cyprus to Euboia and later to Rome. (For writing in alphabetic form, see Wittke, Olshausen, and Szydlak, 2010: 60f.; Wachter, 1996: 536–547.) The same holds true for other cultural competences such as healing, specialized ritual expertise ('reading the liver'), and the singing of tales. In the 'Orientalizing period' of archaic Greece, Greeks once again learned Oriental arrangements of the gods in families, generations, and genealogies, and of assigning them favourite places, and festivals (Burkert, 1995).

p. 25 Side by side with the centripetal dissemination by travelling specialists, another centrifugal trajectory of circulation shaped the religions of the Greek *poleis*: representatives were sent to the Oracle of Delphi and to the Panhellenic games, places of communication with people who came from Lydia, from North African Cyrenaica, from Sicily, or from the present-day Côte d'Azur. The primary aim of Greeks visiting Delphi was to get advice from the Oracle, but along the way they also acquired religious knowledge from others who were waiting for an oracle, and who had travelled along many coasts and through many lands. Where are the best places to found a new city, are the neighbours aggressive, or do they offer young women to found a family? Similar situations of encounter and informal learning were to be experienced at the four Panhellenic games: at Olympia (the reference point for the reckoning of Greek time since 776 BCE), at Nemea/Argos, at Corinth, and at the Pythia at Delphi. Around the period described here, the experimental forms of 'doing religion' turned towards a new, but rapidly accepted form of ritual. Up until then Greeks threw gifts both for the gods and for the deceased into pits, thereby destroying valuable objects. But now they started to build



houses or to refurbish a ruler's dwellings to shelter a statue of their god (initially for female goddesses), setting up platforms along the inner walls to 'erect' gifts (*anathêma*). The ash altar in the meadow gave way to a stone altar in front of the god's house. Concomitantly, the placing of gifts in the tombs of wealthy family members was restricted; thus, the god of the *polis* conspicuously assembled the community's wealth.

The fundamental entity is the *polis*. There is no division between the religious and the secular sphere, no 'church' with a social division between priests/clergy and laypeople, no theological knowledge, taught at seminaries and theological faculties (Parker, 2011: 40–63; Versnel, 2011; Eidinow, 2016). One may speak of theologies (in plural), as voiced, for example, in the theatre both in speech and in objections, but not as a dogma that one has to concur with (*homologeîn*). The Greek word commonly used for proper religious behaviour, *eusêbeia*, can indeed be translated as devotion, but it means loyalty to the *polis* as well.

Religion in the *polis*, however, is not restricted to its public and civic level, performed mostly by the male citizens.<sup>1</sup> Besides the cult of the *poliad* god, the pantheon (the assembly of all gods) allows for an array of devotions and religious activities: gifts, prayers, votives, temples built for gods who protect women giving birth, choirs of girls and boys singing the praise of Apollo, Artemis, and Aphrodite, strangers bringing their own gods, such as the Bendis of the Thracian police in Athens, and slaves saving money in Apollo's bank in order to redeem themselves one day. The pantheon of a *polis*, however, could not be expanded endlessly and remain open to every divine power, but was restricted to approximately twelve gods. New gods were invited when the gods at hand failed. An example can be found in the plague which befell Athens in 420: Apollo, the god into whose competency it fell, was considered not to have managed it properly on account of his support for the enemy, Sparta, in the Peloponnesian war. Therefore, Asclepius was invited to the city and offered a sanctuary first at the harbour, and then in the centre of Athens (Graf, 1997: 94–100; Parker, 1996: 152–98; Auffarth, 1995). Yet another form of religiosity involved an invitation into the mysteries at Eleusis, asked for by many—not only the Athenians themselves, but by travellers from all over the world. The mysteries promised a better life, both in this and the underworld. A third level of doing religion was disputed: itinerant ritual specialists sold religious items, for example inscribed golden lamellae to be put into graves, or used for special competences, including purification or initiation rituals (Graf and Johnston, 2013). Alternatively, the magicians murmured a spell to heal someone or harm somebody else.

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## Religion of the Romans, religions of Rome

*Religio Romana*, strictly speaking, is a cluster of rituals to be performed as a framework for public acts in the *res publica* (the political sphere of the Roman elite). The mega-city of Rome was home to people from all over the ancient world; only a third or even a fifth were Roman citizens, while the majority came as tradesmen or slaves and stayed as freed men over generations. They were neither addressed by nor involved in *religio Romana*. But even Roman citizens could not get satisfaction from this level of religion as far as their personal and individual piety was concerned. There were, however, further levels of religion for the Romans, both in public and as family and household religion (Rüpke, 2001). Very early, since the eighth/seventh centuries, the Italic populations and the Etruscan neighbours in the region of Tuscany developed contacts with the Greek settlers in southern Italy, for example in Neapolis or Poseidonia/Paestum, which impacted on their religious behaviour (Wittke, Olshausen, and Szydlak, 2010: 68f. Colonisations; 74f Etruria; Rüpke, 2018). In the Roman and Etruscan pantheon, the Greek gods find a counterpart with Latin names: Iupiter—Zeus patér; Juno—Hera; Minerva—Athene; Diana—Artemis, and so on. Most of the private religious acts were performed according to the 'Greek rite' (*ritus Graecus*), which means, however, not just Greek religion, but a conglomeration of Indo-European, Roman, and Romanized rituals. For some rituals the Romans hired specialists from Etruria, who were known as experts in divination, which comprises various techniques, among others the observation and interpretation of the flight of birds over a window at the top of a tent, or the reading of the liver of a sacrificed victim.

This specialized competence in religious knowledge (*disciplina Etrusca*) could in theory have led to the Romans losing control over the divinatory rituals, which were a key presupposition for sensitive public acts such as ascertaining the proper time of military action or its outcome. However, Roman consuls were able to keep control, as Roman priests headed the rituals. They were not a professional group, instructed in religious knowledge; rather, priesthood was part of a public career and served to assemble social capital—even the *pontifex maximus* was not the head or supervisor of the other priests (Rüpke, 2008, provides a catalogue of every priest known by name together with his public career). The actual performance of a ritual was the task of the servants. In times of war Romans invited foreign gods to change sides, or they ‘kidnapped’ a god, as—at a critical point in the Punic wars of 205/4 BCE and acting on the advice of the Sibylline books—they did with Kybele/Mater magna in her cultic representation as a black stone at Pessinus in Asia Minor. That said, the aristocracy wanted to retain control ↳ over foreign cults: the ban on the Bacchanalia in 186 BCE shows that the Roman polytheistic system and its openness to foreign deities had its limits.

Most of what we know about Roman religion in the centuries BCE is derived from the information collected and interpreted by the theologian Varro and the historian Livy in the last generation of the Roman Republic and is connected with the archaic revival during the reign of Emperor Augustus (31 BCE–14 CE). Besides the religion of the Romans with its various levels, there were additional religions in Rome. Migrants brought their gods with them and performed their cults in the diaspora, first in their own language, but bit by bit in the language spoken in Rome, which was Greek rather than Latin (Auffarth, 2006). With the expansion of the empire the Romans did not expand their religion. It remained in principle the religion of the citizens of Rome as performed in their own city (Beard, North and Price, 1998; Scheid 2016; Rüpke 2018).

# Religions in the Roman *imperium* and its provinces: Romanizing religions, merging cultures

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## Empire building

Since the Bronze Age there had been a steady cultural flow from east to west comprising material goods, exotic and/or precious items stored in the treasures of sanctuaries or given to the deceased as a last goodbye into graves, together with ideas about world order, or curses with the exotic names of demons. However, a step change took place in 330 BCE, when Alexander the Great led his expedition from Macedonia through Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt to Persia and even India, with the aim of uniting Greek and Persian civilizations. By merging non-Greek cultures with Greek normative ideals of fine arts, literature, and religion, a new globalized culture evolved in India,<sup>2</sup> Egypt, Greece, and Rome, which we call Hellenism. Historians define this as the period between 333 (Alexander) and 31 BCE (the first Roman Emperor Augustus), but in terms of cultural history, Hellenism is a concept which one finds even in late Antiquity (Bowersock, 1990), especially in the pagan restoration of Emperor Julian (r. 361–3) ('the Apostate', from the perspective of Christian historians). The diversity of Greek culture(s) was canonized: the language in its Attic (Athenian) form became the vehicle for elevated literature; a reduced form (pidgin) called *Koiné*, spoken even in Rome, became the 'common' language, alongside Aramaic in the east. Myths were reduced to chapters in handbooks of mythology; literature was edited in a selection of the classics (seven pieces of the three great Athenian dramatists) which were preserved in the library of Alexandria. Greek gods were revered in Egypt, and Egyptian cults spread over the Mediterranean, first in port cities, then also in the hinterland, but only after they had been transformed according to the Greek fashion. The bull-god Apis was merged with Osiris and became an anthropomorphic person: Serapis, sitting on a throne like the famous image of Zeus at Olympia. Only then, in the third and second centuries BCE, having transformed the Egyptian theriomorphic god into a Greek-shaped god, did the Egyptian successors of Alexander's empire, the Ptolemies, install sanctuaries in many places in the Eastern Mediterranean. And later, together with the grain supply for the capital, the foreign gods such as Cybele, Serapis, Isis, travelled from the Orient to Rome (Auffarth, 2013a). Emperor Vespasian (r. 69–79) brought Isis with him to Rome from his Oriental campaign as his personal goddess and built a large compound in a conspicuous place in the capital for her (the *Isaeum Campense*).

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But that is already the effect of a further step in the evolution: the globalized Imperium Romanum. Since the cleansing of the Eastern Mediterranean of pirates achieved in 66 BCE, the Roman army gripped the whole Mediterranean with an iron fist. There was no necessity to exert constant violence, beyond the suppression of revolts by subjected nations and repelling the enemies from the other side of the *limes*. The mere presence of a standing army at critical places (*legiones*) sufficed to prevent revolts and allowed the impression of a peaceful and prosperous reign (*Pax Romana*) to develop. Both St. Luke's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles stress the protective cage of the *Pax Romana* as a predisposition for spreading the Christian religion. And in the epic *Aeneid* (6: 851–3) of Augustan times Vergil has Jupiter spell out the principle of the empire: *Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento, hae tibi erunt artes pacique imponere morem, parcere subiectis et debellare superbos.*<sup>3</sup>

## The case of the Jews, in Palestine and in the diaspora

The second part of this divine mandate was applied to the Jews in Palestine and in the diaspora. Several Jewish revolts occurred in the time between Herodes and Bar Kokhba (c.6 BCE – 136 CE) and were brutally suppressed. The temple and the city of Jerusalem were destroyed, and (eventually) a temple of Zeus/Iupiter was built upon the ruins of the Jewish temple. The temple cult was forbidden, but the Jews were still required to pay their temple tax (*fiscus Iudaicus*), which was used to repair the temple of Iupiter in Rome. Whoever paid the temple tax had, apparently, the right to live according to the Jewish religion and customs (*religio licita*). The end of the temple cult, of the sacrifice at the altar, and of the professional priesthood (held by the clan *cohen*) required a fundamental transformation of Jewish life and identity, catalysing processes which had already begun centuries ago with the centralization of the cult in Jerusalem and the experience of a religion without a temple during the Babylonian exile (597–539/520 BCE). Before the destruction of the Second Temple, pilgrimages to the temple took place three times a year, even from the diaspora communities, preferably for Pesach/Passah. During the rest of the year, communities gathered on the Sabbath in their local synagogues, recited a piece of the Hebrew bible (a language spoken only in the cult) and prayed. Instead of the temple cult, the commandments ‘given by god in the desert’ functioned as a substitute for the individual in his family context. The purity of the cult was translated into the purity of the body, of garments and of kosher food. Instead of the priests, the rabbis (‘teachers’) had to explain how to fulfil the commandments of the bible (Torah) in a totally different environment and amidst foreign people, who did not live in the same way (Stroumsa, 2005). This led to an ongoing debate: while some rabbis taught an exclusion as radical as possible, most advocated a pathway of mediation. Both voices were collected and transmitted in the Mishna and in the Talmud, so that no universally acknowledged norm of correct behaviour emerged. At the end of the first century, the *fiscus Iudaicus* fostered an ethnic identity and cut off many people who formerly attended Jewish services (the so-called ‘God-fearers’). They now began to follow a Jewish reform movement without circumcision and dietary laws, which held that the creator-god handed over the executive power to a younger god, perhaps his son (a concept found already in the Hebrew Bible in Daniel 7). As Daniel Boyarin (2012) and Peter Schäfer (2012, 2017) have argued, Judaism as an orthodox and orthopractic religion codified in the Talmud and excluded by Christians, and especially by the legislation of the Christian emperors, notably Justinian, did not fully emerge before the fifth century. But still the rule remains: a Jew is not a believer or one who observes the 613 religious laws, but a human being born of a Jewish mother.

## Religion of the Roman Empire and its provinces

For most people, the period of the Roman Empire was a time of internal and external peace and prosperity. It was no longer necessary for them to maintain armies, and the resources could be invested instead in Roman-style buildings, aqueducts, baths, temples, festivals, libraries, and theatres. However, Romanization, in the sense of imposing empire-wide regulations such as taxes, did not include religion. Roman religion remained the religion of the Roman citizens and their families, some of whom lived in colonies outside the capital. In this case, a temple on the central square (*forum*) for the Capitoline trias, Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, replicated the original in Rome. An additional disseminator of Roman religion were the Roman soldiers in contact with local people. The old and new elites in the provinces eagerly adopted the foreign civilization as modern, a phenomenon which today is known as self-Romanization, a process both described and criticized by Tacitus in his biography of *Agrippa* (98 CE). (Woolf, 2001: 1122–27; Spieckermann, 2001: 1121f). Romans, however, did not allow their subjects to take over Roman religion (Bendlin, 1997). Provincials could request and were then (eventually) allowed to found a cult for Rome as a goddess (*thea Rômê*) together with her statue; statues of the emperor and his family could also be erected (for example at Gythion or in the *mêtrôon* at Olympia). A ruler-cult, that is, the cult of the emperor and his family, after he had been divinized (*apotheôsis*), did not eliminate the ancestral cults of the provinces. Rulers were revered, but only with small gifts, such as frankincense and wine, not with animal sacrifices as were gods (Graf, 1999, 143–5). The provincials also expanded local festivals to include acclamations of the emperor. The inscription of the re-foundation of a festival at Oinoanda in Asia minor, for example, is explained by Wörrle (1988).

Romanization fostered urbanization. People living in villages (*pagi*) were despised as ignoramuses who perform strange rituals: they were pagans (*pagani*), especially when Christians ruled as emperors. In the cities one could attend a great variety of religious events. Many religions were lived in associations (*collegia*), groups that came together regularly, once a year, or monthly, and in which each member had a particular duty. A favoured goal was the organization of burial and commemoration, for which money was gathered in order to finance and escort the burial of its members. Christian communities often presented themselves as providing care for the soul before and after death, thus adapting features of *collegia*. The administration of the community's treasure was a highly responsible duty, assigned to a trustworthy person; eventually, this office resulted in an established professional status of cleric and controller—the bishop (Greek *episkopos*, Roman *episcopus*). Other associations came together to celebrate mystery cults such as that of Dionysus, Mithras, or Isis (Gordon, 2012; Auffarth, 2013b; Bremmer, 2014).

## The long transformation

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### A period of transformation rather than ‘the fall’ of the Roman Empire

The sack of Rome in 410 was an event that shocked the Romans. After 800 years, the empire was no longer able to repel the ‘barbarians’ at the borders; indeed, for the first time the barbarians conquered core territory. Is the epoch of migrations an ‘invasion of the barbarians’, as the established English and French terms portray, adopting the perspective of Roman authors, pagans as well as Christians? Is it the end of civilization (Ward-Perkins, 2005) or the beginning of the Dark Ages, a breach with the classical tradition which was remedied only centuries later during the renaissance of classical antiquity and the Enlightenment at the dawn of early modern times? The established German term is *Völkerwanderung*, or migration of nations, suggesting that whole Germanic nations such as the Visigoths, the Goths (who were said by early modern English and French scholars to have created the barbarian or ‘Gothic’ style of architecture), and the Vandals migrated to the south, bringing fresh blood to replace the ‘decadence’ of a civilization which had passed its apogee centuries ago. To speak of a clearly marked end of classical Antiquity, whether due to an internal process of decline ↴ and fall or to external powers, is an influential idea (Wickham 2005; Heather 2010). An alternative view is to describe the transition from late Antiquity to the Middle Ages as a long and gradual transformation. This view finds support in the fact that especially in the Eastern Mediterranean the Greek-speaking Roman Empire (Byzantium) survived at least until the rise of Islamic powers and in the long run until the Ottoman Empire swallowed up Constantinople in 1453. Since the seventh century, with the rise of Islamic powers, the Mediterranean—as already indicated—was divided into three parts: on the southern shore were different Muslim rulers, in the eastern part was the ‘Byzantine’ Roman Empire, and in the north-western part was ‘Latin-Europe’, a puzzle of micro-Christianities, united since the eighth century into the Catholic religion by a ruler’s decision (Brown, 1996; Meier 2019, 15–124).

## The end of sacrifice and no image of god

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At first sight, and in the light of theologians such as Tertullian (c.200), Christianity might be seen as absolutely opposed to polytheism, emphasizing ethics instead of rituals. But given a second more penetrating glance, Christianity turns out to be fully anchored in the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations and to share many features with other religions of antiquity, with which it also shared the same urban space. Polemics against bloody sacrifice are not a Christian invention. And though Christians did not ritually slaughter animals themselves, they took part in banquets nevertheless, and Paul allows them to eat meat which had been distributed at the temple market (1 Corinthians 10:23–30). Furthermore, they used to offer to their God the same gifts to the gods which the ancient world knew: wine, oil, bread, wax for candles and waxen representations of limbs in need of healing, incense, and so on (Bendlin, 2000: 1228–1232; see also the chart in Auffarth, 2016: 549). And, metaphorically, the death of Jesus was interpreted in the light of the animal sacrifice which the Jews shared with Greek and Roman religions.<sup>4</sup> Gradually, the Eucharist became the Christian form of sacrifice, involving the metaphor of shedding of blood and the breaking of the body. Forcing Christians to sacrifice and upon refusal sentencing them to death are mostly sporadic and short-term measures, often locally or regionally restricted (see Pliny, *Epistula* 10, 96–97; Phillips, 2000: 1246–50, esp. 1249). When the Christian emperors outlawed bloody sacrifices (Constantius II [r. 337–61] in 356), they repeated earlier decrees launched by pagan emperors. Two reasons fostered the abandonment of bloody sacrifices within classical religion: first when in official sacrificial rituals the expert ‘read’ the liver and predicted the approaching end of the emperor, the emperor lost all authority; and second more and more Romans abhorred ↵ the ritual of killing animals as disgusting and obsolete. When Emperor Julian ‘the Apostate’ reintroduced sacrificial rituals during his attempt at pagan restoration in 361–3, even his pagan supporters criticized him (see Ammianus Marcellinus, *Roman History* 22:13 [c. 400], whereas Libanios, or. 12: 89–91 defended Julian’s restoration).

Another issue was the image of god. Classical intellectuals had for a long time ridiculed the simple folk, who handled the statue of wood or stone as if it were a living person. In principle everybody knew that the destruction of a statue did not mean the death of the respective god. A formula that gained plausibility was that the statue is just a container housing the living god, when people revere him in worship; it is a marker of his epiphany, a visible sign matching the original, the invisible God. Christians used this concept to explain the relationship between Christ and the creator: while God the father is the invisible original, God the son is his visible and material image, which comes near or is even identical to the original. *Signum* and *significatus* are one and the same. The mother, Mary, is only a container; she is not herself divine (see Auffarth, 2010b, 465–80, in which ‘comes near’ *hómoios* ὅμοιος and ‘identical’ *homo-óúsios* ὁμοούσιος are the terms discussed for the Credo-formula at Nikaia/Nicaea in 325). However, the pictures of Mary holding her child followed the ancient Egyptian iconography of Isis breast-feeding her son. Christians could not refrain from representing their personal divine images in the form of pictures (as Jews did as well, for example, at the synagogue of Dura Europos in the third century) and developed an authoritative iconography. They avoided, however, three-dimensional statues. In a culture in which divine persons were venerated as visible images adherents expected, even longed for, an image in Christian worship as well.

Although Christian buildings (where Christians came together every Sunday for prayers, the recitation of the scripture, or pre-baptismal instruction) were not initially considered sacred—as is also true for the Jews and their synagogues—they were gradually endowed with sacrality in the manner of a classical temple. The central spot was no more a table on which the scripture was placed, but an altar housing the bones of a Christian martyr (modelled on Revelation 6:9–11). The classical norm forbidding the burial of a corpse in a city led to Christian churches being built outside the walls (*sepultura extra muros*).<sup>5</sup> Here Christians could draw on previous cultic experience: the ancient hero cults honoured a common (but fictional) ancestor of the community, not to be identified with the deceased of a particular family; such cults also broke the taboo of mingling sacrality and death.

Further common ground between classical and Christian religion can be found in the cult of the sun. The sun was a strong symbol in classical religion and became one in Christianity. Since Augustus, Apollo as the sun-god became the prototype of the emperor, as a crown of sunrays distinguished the statue of the emperors on coins. While gods were far away as stars in heaven, emperors were their visible personification on earth. The equation one sun, one god, one emperor led to a pagan monotheism. Emperor Constantine I the Great (r. 306–37), whose reign marks the turning point from underground Christianity towards a public religion visible in large church buildings, allegedly saw the vision of the sun in form of the cross and became monarch after his victory over his rival tetrarch ‘under this sign’ (*hoc signo victor eris*). Did he see it as a Christian religious symbol or the old image of the emperors? Probably both. In 336 the Christians took over the ‘birthday of the sun’ at midwinter solstice as the day on which Christ was born; the midsummer night was dedicated to the ‘forerunner’ John the Baptist. The first day of the week, when Christians celebrated their mass, was called sun-day, and the rising sun became a symbol of the resurrection of the saviour.

Loud polemics exaggerate for later generations the difference between Christians and pagans, but in order to communicate in worship and in order to persuade anyone to convert, religious language, symbols, and rituals must be plausible. In families with members of different religious allegiance there are occasions that are celebrated together. Christianity—and other ‘new’ religions—took place in an already existing religious world with its established conventions.

## Christianity survives, paganism fades away

Studying Roman festivals in the Greek East, Fritz Graf concludes by contrasting the end of sacrifice with the continuity of festivals (Graf, 2015: 318–22). Christianity survived the transformation of late antiquity, but was transformed itself from an urban religion to a feudal and rural religion. People moved from cities to the countryside. Cultural goods were saved, not by the monks in the Egyptian desert, but by the monks in Benedictine monasteries (Monte Cassino, 529). Recalling Roman aristocratic *villae* they built self-sustaining entities containing a kitchen, a bakery, stables for animals, gardens with trees, a hospital, a cemetery, a church, a library, a scriptorium, in which, in addition to liturgical and theological books, they also copied classical texts. In an empire Christianized through imperial measures, Christianity itself was Romanized. In every administrative district (διοίκησις *diocese*) a bishop was installed. When secular powers faded in the west, bishops took over their duties: organizing the distribution of grain, defence against looting, and providing help for the poor. Christianity replaced the empire’s structure and universality: in every province and diocese there should be one Catholic (which means ‘all over the world’) bishop, even if there is no Christian. Feudal Christianity claims to be spread over ‘the inhabited world’ (οἰκουμένη *ecumenical*), but in reality, it often amounted to no more than a thin veneer, involving the king’s family and his followers. Hiberno-Scottish missionaries (from outside the Roman Empire) travelled around seeking martyrdom, not in order to build up permanent parishes and churches. In the cult of saints medieval Christianity became a polytheistic religion on a secondary level. A new chapter was opened when Charlemagne united his Frankish Empire as a Christian Catholic empire, founding Latin Europe.



## Conclusion

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In historical terms classical Antiquity is both a contrast to, and a model for the monotheistic religions which became the religious mainstream in medieval and modern Europe, sometimes adopting a hierarchical priesthood (as in Catholicism) and sometimes adopting shared customs denoting purity (as in Judaism). The systems of Greek and Roman religions were based on rituals, symbols, and patterns of polytheism, themselves the legacy of the palace cultures in the Ancient Near East and Greece. The Greek and Roman city states (*poleis*) adapted these to non-autocratic societies (*polis*-religion), inventing the individual and the individual soul (Bremmer, 2002). In the empires of Hellenism and Rome religions were not central to the exertion of power (e.g. a ruler-cult). Rather their urban character allowed a plural neighbourhood, in which the monotheistic religions were also well integrated. In late Antiquity a long transformation formed the Middle Ages, when around 650 and with the rise of Islam (itself born in a late antique configuration) the Mediterranean as a former unity became divided into three parts: the Islamic south, Greek Orthodoxy in the east, and Latin-speaking 'Europe' in the west.

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# Notes

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- 1     The restriction, that every form of religion is ‘embedded’ in a *polis*, has been stressed by Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood and Walter Burkert, but criticized by Parker, 2005; Bremmer, 1999; Kindt, 2012; and Auffarth, 2012.
- 2     Hellenism in India is exemplified in the Gandhara civilization, with the Buddhist king Ashoka, middle of the third century.
- 3     ‘Remember, Roman, to rule imperially over the nations. These shall be your skills: to set the force of habit upon peace, to spare those who submit and crush in war the haughty!’ (translated by Nicholas Horsfall, 2013. The *Aeneid* was written c.29–19 BCE).
- 4     See Romans 3:25. For Jesus as the true victim, see John 1:29 and Revelation 5:6. The reference text for the systematic interpretation of Jesus’ death as sacrifice is *Hebrews*, which presents Jesus as the high-priest and at the same time the victim of the ‘last and ultimate’ sacrificial ritual. (Wick: 1251f. Eucharist as sacrifice Cyprianus, *ep.* 63; martyrdom as sacrifice *Acta Apollonii* 44.)
- 5     The law that ordered burials outside the city walls is repeated in *Codex Theodosianus* 9, 17, 6 and 7.

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### CHAPTER

## 3 Religion and Latin Western Europe, 600–1500

Geoffrey Koziol

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### Abstract

The medieval Catholic Church evolved. That is, over the course of the Middle Ages everything about the religion changed, yet the changes occurred within well-established patterns and principles that remained constant. Among those patterns were: oscillations between episcopal and papal ideologies of ecclesiastical unity; a papacy whose theoretical claims to authority never matched its actual power; and a commitment to pastoral care. The Church also insisted on doctrinal and institutional conformity, manifested especially in its reliance on creeds that presented non-logical propositions as articles of faith. The result was to generate heresies, but in responding to heresies the Church also educated the laity in matters of faith, while allowing considerable latitude in matters of private and lay devotions. Among such devotions, the ‘bridal mysticism’ of devout women stands as an example of both the limitations and intellectual depth of the religion.

**Keywords:** Middle Ages, Catholicism, papacy, authority, pastoral care, creeds, heresies, laity, devotions

**Subject:** History of Religion, Religion

**Series:** Oxford Handbooks

TO speak of Christianity in Latin Europe during the Middle Ages is to speak of Catholicism; for even the heresies that developed after the eleventh century were framed in terms of Catholicism, either by explicitly denying specific Catholic doctrines or by being inversions of Catholic institutions projected by the imaginations of learned churchmen. However, to say that Catholicism was the dominant form of Christianity in the period is not to say that Catholicism was monolithic or that medieval persons were unthinking believers in its tenets. Quite apart from the fact that throughout the Middle Ages there were sceptics among ordinary men and women, no religion could have been institutionally successful in so many regions over so long a period of time had it been a monolith (Arnold, 2005). Catholicism was capacious, and the 1000 years of the medieval period varied greatly both by period and by region, making broad generalizations about the religion hazardous. Most hazardous of all is any attempt to identify the religion with the Roman papacy.

## The papacy

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As an example one might take the document known as the *Dictatus papae* (Caspar, 1920–1923: I, 201–8; Fuhrmann, 2016). It was compiled early in the titanic struggle between Pope Gregory VII (1073–85) and the German king (later emperor) Henry IV (r. 1056–1105). The conflict is often called ‘the Investiture Contest’, though the term is misleading, since it was about much more than ‘investiture’ (that is, whether kings and other lay political leaders had the right to invest high ecclesiastical dignitaries with the insignia of their offices). It was not even entirely about principles of church reform, ↴ since both sides largely agreed on them (Robinson, 2004: 276–82; Miller, 2013). An equally important aspect of the conflict concerned the respective roles of the papacy and bishops in leading reform. In consequence, it was about the powers that popes did or did not have over the Church as a whole. The *Dictatus* itself is simply a set of twenty-seven brief statements, which were evidently intended to serve as the headings of a collection of precedents that would buttress Gregory’s claims. They include some of the most astringent assertions of papal primacy ever articulated, among them:

That no chapter or book shall be held as canonical without his authority.

That all major issues regarding any church should be referred to him.

That only the pope can make new laws for the needs of the time.

That he can depose and reconcile bishops without the convening of any synod.

That his legate has precedence over all bishops in a council, even if he is of lower grade, and may declare a sentence of deposition against them.

That his sentence cannot be rescinded by anyone, while he can rescind the sentences of all.

That his name [i.e. *papa*, Pope] is unique in the world.

That he shall be judged by no one.

That only the Pope has the right to use the imperial regalia.

That all princes shall kiss his feet.

That he is allowed to depose emperors.

That whoever is not in agreement with the Roman Church is not to be regarded as Catholic.

Subsequent popes built on and refined such claims. Innocent III (1198–1216) changed the primary papal title from ‘vicar of Peter’ to ‘vicar of Christ’, a small change with large implications. For in the older Catholic tradition Christ alone was ‘true king and true priest’, and no single human being could exercise both offices. For the pope to become ‘vicar of Christ’ meant that in some sense he received Christ’s priestly and royal authority alike, implying some sort of ultimate authority over any and all secular rulers. In the thirteenth century the papacy also developed a theory of the ‘fullness’ of papal power (*plenitudo potestatis*), contrasting with bishops’ mere ‘share of responsibility’ (*pars sollicitudinis*). In this theory papal power was full, indeed, for in addition to the pope’s ‘ordinary power’ (*potestas ordinata*) he might exercise an ‘absolute power’ (*potestas absoluta*), in keeping with the Roman law maxim, ‘The prince is not bound by the laws’ (*Princeps legibus solutus est*) (Pennington, 1984: 16–73).

These, at least, were the claims. The reality was always rather different. Gregory VII did absolve Henry IV’s subjects from their oaths of fealty, effectively deposing him, and pronounced a solemn anathema on Henry himself to boot. But the deposition worked only because Henry’s subjects had already rebelled against him.



After Henry outflanked the rebellion and reasserted his authority, Gregory deposed him a second time. In the absence of any support from Henry's German subjects, this new deposition had no effect. Henry eventually marched on and captured Rome, leaving Gregory to be rescued ↵ by the Norman rulers of Sicily who, after looting the city, brought Gregory to Salerno, where he died in exile in 1085. Not until 1097 were his successors able to fully secure Rome (Partner, 1972: 138–9; Morris, 1989: 113–26; Robinson, 1999: 143–320). One could produce any number of like examples, even among the French, who represented themselves as a particularly Christian nation ruled by 'the most Christian king': for example, during the Fourth Crusade, when the French crusaders conquered the Christian city of Zara (1202) and the Christian capital of Constantinople (1204), in flat disobedience to Innocent III's clear injunctions (Queller and Madden, 1997: 63–103); the open criticism of papal policies in 1247 by King Louis IX (r. 1226–70) (Le Goff, 1996: 183–4); and the northern French bishops' refusal to attend the council summoned by Pope Boniface VIII (1294–1303) in 1302 against their king (Strayer, 1980: 260–73). In fact, papal authority was everywhere contested. Oddly, it was especially contested, at least politically, in the city of Rome itself, and in the Papal States of central Italy, which the papacy needed to control, first in order to provide revenues, and second, in order to create a *cordon sanitaire* against the threat of political absorption by Lombard, German, and Sicilian kings (Partner, 1972; Noble, 1984).

In considering the papacy's power during the Middle Ages one should keep several things in mind. First, it is only with Gregory VII that one can accurately begin to speak of the 'Roman Catholic Church' (as Gregory himself did in the *Dictatus*). For the previous 600 years the norm was simply to speak of 'the Church' (*ecclesia*). After all, at least in theory there was no other 'Church' against which a 'Catholic Church' needed to name itself, the 'Greek' Church being seen not as separate but wayward. Within this Church the pope had a certain precedence of honour as the successor of Peter (largely based on Matthew 16:18 and a few other New Testament passages), but honour gave him no undisputed political or jurisdictional authority. When one or another pope asserted such claims, it was often because some political faction in a distant region was seeking papal support against its local rivals. More often than not the popes' interventions backfired, resisted not only by kings but by bishops also. For in the Merovingian and Visigothic kingdoms and in the later Carolingian and Ottonian empires, the Church tended to be less papal than episcopal and collegial, bishops seeing each other as peers who acted collectively, without the need for any papal imprimatur. After all, if popes could point to Matthew 16:18 to argue that Christ had committed the power of binding and loosing to Peter (and thence to the popes as Peter's successors), bishops could point to Matthew 18:18, where Christ committed the exact same power to the apostles as a whole (Froehlich, 2010).

In this regard one must also attend to a distinction—made formally only in the twelfth century but implicit much earlier—between 'jurisdiction' and 'orders': respectively, between administrative and sacramental powers (Benson, 1968: 8–9, 45–55, 82–9, 116–20, 179–80). In orders the pope had no superiority over other bishops anywhere in Christendom: he was simply another bishop. The great increase in papal authority came in jurisdiction, mostly during and after the twelfth century, when the papal curia became the legal and administrative nerve centre of Latin Christendom. Beginning in the second half of the twelfth century litigants from everywhere in Europe came to the curia ↵ to present their cases, the trial and settlement often being delegated to judges appointed in the *Audientia litterarum contradictarum*, where the determining legal and factual issues at stake in any given suit were defined (Sayers, 1971: 11–25, 54–8). Throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries plenary councils were held under papal authority to establish ecclesiastical policy for the entire Church, notably the four Lateran councils of 1123, 1139, 1179, and 1215 (Morris, 1989: 217, 447–51; Robinson, 1999: 121–15). From the early thirteenth century popes regularly required aids or subsidies to be paid by the laity as well as by churches or churchmen according to their annual revenues in order to support crusades or papal diplomatic and military ventures (Lunt, 1934: I, 71–81). Over the course of the same century more and more local ecclesiastical appointments came to be made directly by the popes, in a process known as 'provision' (Barraclough, 1935; Smith, 2015). And, of course, the popes were the primary source of legislation, often through the issuance of rescripts or 'decretals' by which

they solved the thorny legal questions posed to them by bishops, legates, and judges delegate. Collected in great tomes (the *Liber extra* of Gregory IX in 1234, the *Liber Sextus* of Boniface VIII in 1298) and studied and commented upon by canon lawyers in universities, papal decretals became the basis of the canon law that regulated the Catholic Church until 1917 (Brundage, 1995: 44–69).

Even in these matters, however, one should not exaggerate the papacy's control. Papal judges delegate were nominated by the plaintiffs, who often chose them from among neighbouring churchmen already well known to them. More often than not, the judges merely approved an arbitrated agreement made by the two parties under their authority (Sayers, 1991: 104–16; Ott, 2018). And the papacy's fiscal powers were deeply compromised. The annual revenue known as 'Peter's Pence' illustrates the problem: owed to Rome by England and a few other northern kingdoms, its payment was constantly in arrears, while one reason it was paid at all was because everyone involved in its collection took a cut, from local priests and rural deans to archdeacons and bishops (Lunt, 1934: I, 65–70). The proceeds of crusading aids levied by popes often never left the kingdoms where they had been collected (their use for crusades quickly becoming a fiction), the lion's share invariably being appropriated by secular rulers. And popes could seek 'charitable' subsidies for their own needs only from the clergy of friendly kingdoms, and only where those clergy did not already pay 'crusading' aids, and only after hard negotiations with both rulers and churches that always left the popes with less than they wanted (Favier, 1966: 93–128, 208–32). As for the pope's right to make appointments to ecclesiastical benefices, a story from the Life of Abbot Samson of Bury St Edmunds (d. 1211) provides some necessary perspective: when a claimant came to him with a letter of papal appointment, Samson opened a chest, pulled out a sheaf of other papal letters of appointment to the exact same benefice, and said that when those others had had their turn the new demandant would have his (Jocelin of Brakelond, 1989: 51). In 1265 Clement IV (1265–8) formally asserted the right to provide to *all* ecclesiastical benefices whatsoever; but he was enunciating a theoretical claim much more sweeping than most popes applied in practice (Smith, 2015).

## Universities

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The inaptness of an exaggerated emphasis on ecclesiastical uniformity and conformity under papal authority is visible in every aspect of the medieval Church, not least in what may well be the Middle Ages' most durable legacy: universities (Ridder-Symoens, 1992). It is true that during the thirteenth century most universities set out to obtain papal bulls formally recognizing their rights and privileges, in particular the right to grant the *licentia ubique docendi* (the right of its graduates to teach in all universities throughout Christendom). It is true that popes came to rely heavily on universities, and therefore protected them, promoted them, and often interfered in their business. They sent them authorized collections of decretals as the basis for the teaching of canon law. They required all cathedral schools to have university-trained masters and all schools in metropolitan sees (that is, the sees of archbishops) to have in addition a master in theology. They enabled young scholars to study in universities by allowing them to receive revenues from benefices without needing to reside in the location of the benefices. However, the first universities that developed in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries had not been founded by popes. They had not even been founded by bishops. They simply grew, organically, from the simple fact that students wanted to study with important scholars who themselves gravitated to places that had other famous scholars: thus Bologna for law, Paris and Oxford for law and theology, and Salerno for medicine. Papal recognition came later. Furthermore, throughout the Middle Ages a 'university' was not a single institution of higher education but a corporation or guild (*universitas*) of either masters or students who banded together to protect their own interests against town governments, grasping landlords, and local bishops. This was the reason the universities sought papal privileges; but privileges of secular rulers were just as eagerly sought and even more effective on the ground.

In fact, one did not need the pope to found a *studium generale* (the technical term for what today is called a ‘university’, in contrast to the medieval definition of a ‘university’ as a corporate guild): of the twenty-eight existing in Europe by 1378, only one was founded by the pope, and that was in the papal curia itself. Most universities in thirteenth-century Italy were founded through the initiatives of town governments, eager for the revenues and prestige they brought. Secular princes could also establish them: Emperor Frederick II (r. 1220–50) founded a short-lived university at Naples in 1224; King Alfonso IX of León (r. 1188–1230) a successful one at Salamanca in 1218–19; and King Charles IV of Luxembourg (r. 1346–78) an exceedingly successful one at Prague in 1347. And throughout Europe, many new universities developed when a conflict with local secular or ecclesiastical powers led masters or students to secede en masse to a more welcoming town. In all cases, papal confirmation came later. The very ecclesiastical status of universities was always a little blurry. Although most students were clerics, their clerical status was often fictive and temporary. And not all students were even fictively clerics: lay students were studying at Paris in the late twelfth century, and ↵ most students at Bologna who studied civil law were laymen, as were many who studied medicine at Montpellier. Indeed, one reason the corporation of students at Bologna first sought privileges was to give lay students the same legal protections automatically enjoyed by clerical students.

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Finally, no one—not popes, or bishops, or even university chancellors—could successfully control what was taught in universities, no matter what censures and threats were brought to bear, as shown convincingly by the inexorable success of Aristotelian categories against all critics. The very core of the ‘scholastic’ method used in university teaching was disputation, through which scholars attempted to reconcile contradictory authoritative arguments. It is hardly surprising, then, that universities were perennially hothouses of disputatiousness, and that the important criticisms of excessive papal authority of the later Middle Ages were championed not just in universities but by their greatest figures: by Marsilius of Padua, former rector of the University of Padua; by the Franciscan William of Ockham of Oxford, perhaps the most original theologian of the Middle Ages; by Pierre d’Ailly and Jean Gerson, both rectors of the University of Paris (Oakley, 2003: 60–110). Not least, the first complete English translation of the Bible was made at Oxford by John Wycliffe (c.1328–84) and his circle, specifically to permit access to the teachings of scripture by the laity. And this was the Bible read by the community of English heretics known as Lollards (Kelly, 2016).

## Principles of medieval Catholicism

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However essential the papacy was to the institutions and identity of the Western church, that church was ‘catholic’ (meaning ‘universal’) long before it was ‘Roman Catholic.’ A number of constant principles characterized its Catholicism.

Perhaps the most distinctive of these principles is that Catholicism was so decidedly ‘credal’. The standard was the so-called Nicene Creed, though the simpler Apostles’ Creed was more commonly used by the laity. The importance of this commitment to a creed meant that medieval Catholic ‘faith’ really was unlike Protestant faith. Insofar as religions develop within societies and adapt to those societies’ needs and norms, in the Middle Ages ‘faith’ (*fides*) came to share the most important elements of ‘faith’ as more widely understood at the time. Faith meant loyalty. Thus, to be a member of the ‘faithful’ (*fidelis*) meant, implicitly, to be loyal to the Church and its teachings, as enunciated in the Creed. And the Creed really was central to Catholic belief and teaching. Already during the Carolingian reforms of the later eighth and ninth centuries, diocesan synods consistently demanded that local priests know the Creed and understand its basic doctrinal points, so that they could teach them to the laity. In the same period one of the many responsibilities of godparents was to make sure that their godchildren knew the Creed. How successful this programme was cannot be said; but that the programme was attempted is proven by the large number of surviving commentaries on the Creed, intended to instruct priests so they could instruct the faithful (Keefe, 2002).

p. 44 The dogmatic statements of creeds bring to light another tendency of Catholicism. The Church often solved doctrinal problems by demanding that two or more apparently contradictory statements be held as equally true. In the language of Nicaea (as amended by the Council of Constantinople in 381), God is three persons in one, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and Christ is at once true God and true man. There was a logic to this penchant for holding apparently contradictory statements as true. Essentially, creeds made such statements when their authors tried to avoid the problems raised by extremes. In this case, if Christ were not truly human, then there was no human atonement for sin; but if he were not truly God, then the sacrifice for sin would be imperfect and incomplete. Therefore, Christ's birth, death, resurrection, and ascension had to be physical and human, even at the same time that Christ was God. Faith was assent to the contradiction.

The medieval Catholic Church consistently met dissent and theological contradictions by applying the same principle. Thus, one of the impetuses for the summoning of the Fourth Lateran Council (Lateran IV) in 1215—the largest council held in the West up to that time—was the Church's struggle against heresy, most importantly the supposed heresy of the Cathars, dualists who held that God, being pure spirit, could not possibly have created the material world, and that as God Christ could not possibly have been a material being. Lateran IV addressed this dissent in its very first canon by expanding the Nicene Creed with additional statements forcefully directed against these beliefs: that there was *one* divine principle in the universe, *corporeal and spiritual*, who made all creatures *spiritual and corporeal* (García y García *et al.*, 2013: 163–4). An even more important example was the doctrine of 'transubstantiation', also articulated in Lateran IV's expanded creed. This is the doctrine that when consecrated by a priest the 'elements' of the Eucharist (bread and wine) became the Body and Blood of Christ. They were not a *symbol* of Christ's Body and Blood, nor *reminders* of his sacrifice in Body and Blood. They were not 'consubstantial', where the bread and wine remained bread and wine even as they were also the Body and Blood of Christ. In transubstantiation, the appearance of bread and wine remained but the substance of bread and wine was entirely evacuated, wholly transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ (Pelikan, 1971–89: III, 202–4; Rubin, 1991: 30–2, 53–5, 326–32). The rationale was that if the Eucharist were not the actual Body and Blood of Christ, then the Mass was not a true sacrifice of Christ's Body and Blood. Here, too, 'faith' was turned into a matter of belief in a proposition that was non-logical and counter-empirical. 'Faith' became not just a matter of loyalty. It became a kind of test.

p. 45 Perhaps the most fundamental of all principles of medieval Catholicism was unity. In the language of Nicaea, there was 'one holy, catholic, and apostolic church', which by definition could have only one creed. Although the Church could accept variations on non-essential liturgies and intellectual and literary arabesques on essential dogmas, it could not abide dissent on the tenets of the Creed or on key liturgical observances (such as the day on which individual churches would celebrate Easter). Even here, however, 'unity' could be imagined in different ways. In the first centuries of the Middle Ages, when the Church was largely an episcopal Church, doctrine and discipline were most often articulated and enforced in councils of bishops. This unity was collegial, its model Acts 2:1–4, when the Holy Spirit descended on all Christ's apostles. Accordingly, every council of bishops was an iteration of this first Catholic Pentecost, and the acts of such councils took care to emphasize that their decisions had been made consensually, the bishops acting together to serve 'the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Ephesians 4:3). Beginning in the early thirteenth century a different, papalist model of unity emerged. Built around the new legal learning of universities, this unity was 'corporational'. That is, the Church was a corporation (*universitas*), a juridical and political body. As the body had a single head, so did the Church, whose head was the pope (Tierney, 1955: 87–153).

Whether expressed collegially or corporationally, the Church's emphasis on unity reveals its self-conceptualization as a political community, regulated by laws that were ordained by legitimate authorities and sanctioned by punishments (primarily excommunication). Augustine was indisputably the key figure in developing this understanding of the Church. That is, the Church on earth could not be a Church of saints,

for by virtue of original sin human beings were imperfect. A Church of saints surely existed (Augustine's 'City of God'), but its membership was known only to God. The Church on earth—the visible Church, Augustine's 'City of Man'—was a Church of sinners, and sinners required laws, laws required enforcement, and laws and enforcement required legislators and enforcers. What made the visible Church visible was the participation of the faithful in sacraments—often defined, in a paraphrase of Augustine, as 'visible signs of God's invisible grace'. For the laity the most important sacraments were baptism, confession, and the Eucharistic sacrifice. One result of such teachings was that the Catholic Church insisted on participation in sacraments as a necessary sign of membership in the Church (Pelikan, 1971–89: III, 29–32, 74–80, 92–3, 184–214). Another was that the Latin Church had no qualms about seeing itself as a political body ruled by laws, where the laws were made and enforced by legitimate authorities, whether bishops acting in council or popes acting as vicars of Peter or Christ. This is the reason why, collectively, the greatest monuments of the Latin Church were its laws and legal collections: the canons of episcopal councils and papal letters that were already being collected and disseminated in the fifth century; the great Pseudo-Isidorian forged papal decretals of the ninth century; the canonical collections of Regino of Prüm (c.906), Burchard of Worms (c.1008–23), and Ivo of Chartres (c.1094–1116); the collections of canons that underpinned the Gregorian reform, such as Anselm of Lucca's *Collectio canonum* (c.1083); and so on to Gratian's *Decretum* (c.1140) and ultimately the *Liber Extra* and *Liber Sext* of Gregory IX and Boniface VIII. Even the earliest of these collections regulated numerous details of church law: the different grades of clergy, the prohibitions on marriage for them, the degrees of consanguinity within which legitimate marriage was prohibited, the division of tithes, restrictions on the alienation of church properties, the powers of bishops over their subordinate clergy, of metropolitan bishops over bishops, and so on (Mordek, 1975).

p. 46 The importance of these fundamental principles of Latin Catholicism and the way each amplified the others can best be seen in what was, recurrently, the Church's single most important image: the Body of Christ (Lubac, 2007). The idea goes back to a passage in Paul's 1 Corinthians (10:16–17), in which he speaks of the common meal Christians celebrated: 'For we, being many, are one bread, one body, all that partake of one bread'. From this beginning the Eucharist—which was the Body of Christ—became the sacrament that most embodied the unity of the Church. One reason episcopal councils of the fifth and early sixth centuries used a language of mutual love and charity was because such language was so consonant with the Eucharistic understanding of the Church as bringing the many into unity through shared participation in the Body of Christ. And one reason the corporate language of papal authority was able to gain such purchase in the thirteenth century was because corporatist language was, by definition, a language of a 'body politic' or *corpus juridicum*, making it easy for the language of corporate ecclesiastical governance to be vivified by the Eucharistic language of the Body of Christ. Thus—in another set of paradoxes to be believed by faith—by the thirteenth century one could speak of multiple bodies of Christ: the historical Body of Christ, who was born, lived, died, and was resurrected; the Eucharistic body of Christ, which was the real Body of Christ (*corpus verum Christi*); the *corpus Christi mysticum*, which was the Body of Christ that was the Church of which the pope was the head.

Since the Eucharist was the Body of Christ, not only the celebration of the Eucharist but everything having to do with its confection came to be surrounded by taboos that reinforced its aura of purity. From at least the eleventh century, rules stipulated in awesome detail what one was to do if an insect fell into the chalice of wine, or a drop of consecrated wine fell onto the linen corporal or altarcloth, or onto the ground (e.g. Knowles, 1951: 82–5, 89–92, 123–4; Pontal, 1971: 142–9). The presupposition that the elements of the Eucharist had to be pure gave rise to corollaries that are among the most characteristic traits of medieval Catholicism. For example, if the elements had to be pure, then they could only be handled by those who were pure: hence, the taboos on marriage and sexual intercourse that applied to subdeacons, deacons, and priests, for these were the grades of clergy that officiated at the Eucharist. The high altar where the elements were consecrated was seen as the Holy of Holies (cf. Exodus 25–31), to be entered only by those who were pure. As a result, that location—the choir of a church—was set off limits to entry by the laity,

demarcated by a barrier, at some point by a choir screen that hid the altar from the laity; and the architecture of churches was reconfigured in ways that allowed the laity to enter the side chapels around the choir and the crypts beneath it in order to venerate the saints without entering the choir itself (Lauwers, 2009; Fricke, 2015: 38–41).

Above all, if the body of Christ that was the Eucharist was pure, then the Body of Christ that was the Church also had to be pure, giving rise to an obsessive fear that the mystical Body of Christ was being attacked from outside and polluted from within—especially by heretics and Jews. These had to be plucked from the Body of Christ with the same care that a priest or deacon picked out the bad grains from the good in selecting the wheat that would be milled for the Eucharistic Host.

## The clergy

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The Church recognized several different grades of clergy by orders, of which the four highest were subdeacons, deacons, priests, and bishops. The administration of dioceses and individual churches also required offices, such as provosts, deans, archdeacons, and sometimes archpriests and chorbishops, along with many other lesser positions. Such clerics are often called ‘secular’ clergy because they lived and worked in the world (Claussen, 2004). They might live by a rule, but it was fairly lax, primarily requiring them to recite the daily round of psalms that was the core of the Divine Office. Otherwise, they could hold private property and transmit it by testament, and below the rank of subdeacon they could marry. Because they could hold property and live in the world and because, as clergy, they were literate (in Latin), secular clerics were often the favoured administrators not only of bishops but also of secular lords. In contrast, to be governed by a strict ‘rule’ (*regula*) was a sine qua non of what are often called the ‘regular’ clergy, of whom the classic exemplars were monks (Lawrence, 2015). Originally there were a number of rules governing the monastic life, but eventually the most common came to be the Rule of St Benedict (c.535), though as it spread it was constantly supplemented with additional or alternative details according to the traditions and values of individual monasteries and groups of affiliated monasteries. The hallmark of monks, at least according to the Benedictine Rule, was that they took vows of obedience, stability, and ‘conversion of life’.

Yet these vows do not capture what it was that made monks and monasteries so important during the early Middle Ages. A first reason was political (Innes, 2000; Hummer, 2005). In the eighth century nascent aristocracies learned that they could endow monasteries with lands and have their clients give additional lands, and whoever controlled the monasteries could control the distribution of those lands and their revenues to create political clienteles beholden to them. The vast lands of the most powerful monasteries therefore supported crucial military commands and were a major component of the material power of kings and magnates. A second reason for the importance of monasteries was spiritual (De Jong, 1995; Sullivan, 1998). No matter how wealthy their monasteries were as institutions, as individuals monks were unable to own any private property whatsoever. They could engage in no sexual relations whatsoever. And they were to be cloistered, that is, completely cut off from the world (though laypersons were allowed controlled access to sectors of the monastic church and complex that did not interfere with the monks’ claustration). Strictly speaking, it was not necessary that monks be members of the clergy. Every monastery needed subdeacons, deacons, and priests to celebrate the Eucharist for its brethren, but not every monk needed to be in orders. Indeed, many monasteries welcomed laypersons: this was especially true in the time of Benedict himself, but also, to a lesser extent, in the ninth and tenth centuries, and even more in the twelfth century with the early Cistercians. Throughout the Middle Ages it was also common for pious members of the lay

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↳ aristocracy to retire to a monastery towards the end of their lives in order to make a good death and gain the salvific prayers of their new fellow monks. Nevertheless, in and after the ninth century it became more common for monks to be in orders, as it became more common for those monks to celebrate masses on behalf of patrons—for their prosperity, their victories, their fertility, and, not least, their

salvation. The reason was that patrons thought that the prayers of monks were worth more than the prayers of ordinary clergy, because the lives of the monks were thought to be purer—undefiled by the pollution of the world, that is, the pollution of blood, sex, property, and power.

In considering the early medieval clergy, whether secular or regular, it is important to avoid stereotyping generalizations. For example, the Gregorian Reform is famous for demanding an end to certain clerical abuses—in particular the marriage of priests (nicolaitism) and the sale of ecclesiastical offices (simony). Subsequent papal councils (particularly Lateran II, c.4, 6, and Lateran IV, c.14–16) not only reiterated these demands but also legislated against clerics who wore flamboyant clothing, frequented taverns, gambled, or decked out their horses in fancy caparisons (e.g. García y García, 2013: 105–6, 175–6). But *mutatis mutandis*, these were not new demands. The earliest episcopal councils of which we have record vehemently prohibited all sexual relations to clergy at the grade of subdeacon and above; prohibited them even to live with women other than close relatives; demanded that when clerics appeared in public spaces they dress and bear themselves with decorum; and prohibited them from drinking in public, especially at weddings and feasts. These and other prohibitions were repeated in eighth- and ninth-century episcopal statutes and in tenth-century canonical collections. Something similar is true with respect to monastic reform. The twelfth-century Cistercians wanted to recall the monastic vocation to the letter of the Rule of St Benedict, believing that existing monasticism had declined from its earlier purity; but one already finds the need to ‘reform’ monasticism according to the Rule in Cluniac writers of the tenth and early eleventh centuries and in the ninth-century monastic reforms undertaken during the reign of Louis the Pious (r. 813–40). Rather than accepting contemporaries’ own narratives of decline and reform at face value, one should recognize that these were just that, a narrative topos, and that what was truly important in the Catholic Church was the imperative to reform, which generated, as its necessary justification, a depiction of corruption (Nightingale, 2001). Often enough, what was really happening was not that churches and monasteries had become corrupt but that understandings of what churches and monasteries were supposed to do were changing and adapting to social, economic, and political changes, and that in these conjunctures calls to reform became powerful galvanizing forces justifying new ideals of the religious life.

Certainly ideals of the monastic and clerical life did change during the period. Beginning in the eleventh century and accelerating during the twelfth, more individuals, not just clerics but also members of the military aristocracy, sought out the monastic life less to fulfil a socially useful role as spiritual intercessors and more to satisfy their own individual longings for salvation. The most famous examples are the Cistercians (named from the monastery of Cîteaux, founded in 1098), but there were many others in all countries of Western Europe. The spirituality of these new foundations often displayed ↴ a tension between eremiticism and cenobitism—roughly, between a life of solitary devotion to God and a life of collective discipline. This was another perennial pattern in medieval Catholicism: if the most perfect life was often thought to be exemplified by an individual’s cutting him- or herself off from society to dedicate themselves wholly to God, it was also thought that most individuals were too spiritually weak to do so without succumbing to the sin of pride, and therefore needed the discipline of a rule and the supportive but tough love of a community to succeed in their vocation, for as Basil of Caesarea wrote, ‘If you live alone, whose feet will you wash?’ (Lawrence, 2015: 9). However, at almost exactly the same time others, while acknowledging the need for the discipline of cenobitism, wanted to use their spiritual discipline to benefit society more actively. Often called ‘regular canons’, the best known were the Premonstratensians (famous for their preaching) and the Victorines (of Saint-Victor in Paris, famous for their learning). The Victorines remained important contributors to early scholasticism; the Premonstratensians quickly fell back into a more Cistercian-like claustration. The future of a mixed rule that combined obedience to a rule and social outreach lay with two entirely different orders, the Dominicans and, above all, the Franciscans.



## The Church and women

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The institutions of the Church were dominated by men. In early medieval sources one can find scattered references to ‘deaconesses’ (*diaconissae*) and even women ‘priests’ and ‘bishops’ (*presbyterae*, *episcopae*). But the latter terms most likely refer to the wives of married men who became bishops and priests, and ‘deaconesses’ usually refers to women whose primary role was to perform the kinds of pastoral and charitable activities that required intimacy with lay women. In other words, the positions are not really evidence of women having a greater public role in the early church; they were established in order to keep men in orders from the dangers of consorting with women in private settings (Macy, 2000). Still, women did sometimes have a surprisingly high profile in the early medieval Church. This was especially the case with monasteries, for between c.650 and c.1000 many of the most important regular foundations were either convents or so-called ‘double monasteries’, in which a linked convent and monastery were both ruled by an abbess. However, such establishments tended to be founded and ruled by the families that produced kings, sub-kings, and provincial rulers, who used the foundations’ lands to undergird their political power. They also reflect a situation in which those families wanted prayers from monks and nuns, not necessarily masses. Beginning in the ninth century, prayers no longer seemed enough. Donors and patrons wanted masses, and women could not celebrate them. At that point, the age of the great convents and double monasteries administering vast estates began to end, and with it the age of great abbesses ruling over them.

p. 50 Monasteries populated by men in orders celebrating the Eucharist may have been responsible for more explicit expressions of misogyny, at least until the thirteenth century, just as they were the source of the earliest systematic vitriol against Jews and heretics, and for the same reasons. To monks, women were (literally) the embodiments of pollution, on account of the blood women shed in childbirth and menstruation. One’s impression is that the secular clergy, the regular clergy, and later the Franciscans—that is, the clergy that was most engaged in pastoral care—made fewer extreme statements of disparagement and often called attention to the deep devotion of lay women. It was a ninth-century bishop of Troyes, Prudentius, who defended the unusual Christocentric devotions of Maura, a noble woman of his diocese (Noble, 2012). It was a canon of Reims who, in the tenth century, described with admiration the extraordinary visions of a local peasant girl named Flothilde (Koziol, 2016). In the thirteenth century it was a bishop who had been a regular canon (that is, the kind of canon engaged in pastoral work) who championed the Eucharistic devotions of those religious women later known as ‘beguines’—lay women who chose to remain in the world but pooled their resources to live a common life while practising charitable acts within the community and weaving the altarcloths, corporals, and vestments required by local priests for the celebration of the Mass—exactly as Maura had done in Troyes 350 years earlier (Simons, 2001). In the fashion typical of the medieval Church, beguines were increasingly required to be claustrated and subject to an accepted rule; yet their distinctive devotions thrived, particularly those that focused on the Eucharist and the Body of Christ.

Whether they were cloistered or lived in the world, the affinity of devout women for the Eucharist points to a paradox that has fascinated scholars (Elliott, 2012). From the beginning of the Middle Ages to its end, women were prohibited not only from sacramental orders but also from public preaching (women preaching and engaging in quasi-Eucharistic rites being thought self-evident proof of the dangers of Cathar and Waldensian heretics). Not even the holiest of cloistered women were allowed entry into the choir: instead, they gathered in a separate choir adjacent to the altar or in an upper gallery opposite it, at best allowing them to see the consecration of the Host in which they could not participate (Bruzeliuss, 1992; Coomans, 2004). The paradox is that holy women turned this exclusion into a source of alternative agency by developing a vibrant language of visionary experience which focused on the Body of Christ. Bernard of Clairvaux and other male Cistercians may have written the most (and most elegant) commentaries on the Old Testament Song of Songs. But it was beguines who most lived the experience of its ‘bridal mysticism’.




For in becoming nuns they married Christ. And in the illuminated devotional books used by beguines (for example, the Rothschild Canticles in Yale's Beinecke Library), they expressed the intimacy of their spiritual marriage to Christ in books interweaving text and image in complex devotional programmes: the veil of the nun who marries Christ becomes the altarcloth on which the Body of Christ is consecrated, the shroud in which the crucified Christ was buried, and the coverlet of the bed on which Christ and the bride consummate their 'spiritual union' (Hamburger, 1990). Entirely consistent with this type of devotion, far and away the most popular new feast of the later medieval Church was Corpus Christi, the feast of the Body of Christ, whose origins go back to the visions of a beguine, Mary of Oignies (Rubin, 1991).

## Pastoral care and the laity

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It used to be thought that during the very early Middle Ages the countryside was woefully underserved by priests, allowing all sorts of relict pagan practices and beliefs to persist. However, recent archaeological work has shown that the fifth- and sixth-century countryside was dotted with small churches of all sorts, at least in the already Christianized territories of the old Roman Empire: parish churches, funerary churches, baptistries, oratories, churches next to fortifications, churches in still-functioning villas, churches remaining from disintegrating villas. If there was a concentrated settlement or a loose set of habitations there was likely a church in the vicinity (Schneider, 2014). Even in England, which did not develop a defined network of parish churches until after the Norman Conquest in 1066, 'minsters' gathered not only monks but also priests, who were sent out into the countryside to preach and hold services at 'private' churches, or even at crossroads easily reached from surrounding hamlets (Blair, 2005). As for remnants of a supposed 'pagan' practices, such practices surely existed, especially in regions that had never been part of the Roman Empire. Yet often the practices were felt to be religiously agnostic actions that people had always performed, informed by widespread beliefs about the sublunary world. Accordingly, the learned clergy attacked them as 'foolish' or 'superstitious' more often than 'pagan'.

Studying the sources that inform us of these activities brings another realization: from the very beginning of the Middle Ages to its end, the Catholic Church was deeply committed to pastoral care. Pope Gregory the Great (590–604) wrote sermons for the laity, as did Bishop Caesarius of Arles (502–42). On the Continent in the ninth century these and others' sermons were collected and disseminated; in England, after the 960s, they were rewritten in the vernacular (Kienzle, 2000). When compiling and copying them later preachers might add their own touches or compose their own sermons—the homilies of Wulfstan of York are powerful examples, Hrabanus Maurus' often delightful, as when he speaks of himself worrying at night about how to help his flock persevere in their 'progress in the Lord' (Hrabanus Maurus, 78–80). In synods of the late eighth and ninth centuries and in the capitularies that disseminated their decisions, bishops repeatedly enjoined their priests to preach to the laity in their care: to preach to them in their vernacular language, of matters that concerned them, in ways familiar to them; to preach to them not just what the Creed was but what it meant; to preach to them of the virtues that Christians were required to show each other, whether as peers to peers, inferiors to superiors, or superiors to inferiors (Rhijn, 2007).

To an extent this programme was interrupted in the later ninth and tenth centuries on account of Viking invasions and political disarray in England and the Carolingian Empire. On the other hand, there is evidence that the troubles themselves bothered laymen and laywomen and caused them to demand greater attention to pastoral care, and a Church less bogged down in political power struggles. By the early eleventh century there is no doubt. There has been much debate over the programme known as the  Peace of God, but it is quite clear that it was promoted by preaching to the laity, not least by monks, both at the Peace assemblies themselves and in between the assemblies (Koziol, 2018). At the very same moment one of the great transformations of the Middle Ages was underway: the process by which local communities came to be more closely bound up with and organized around parish churches (Iogna-Prat, 2006: 217–49, 311–36). As a

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result, during and after the eleventh century it became impossible for the laity to escape either its churches or the teachings of Christianity. The social life of communities (whether villages or parishes, towns or cities) was saturated with Catholic practices: baptism at birth; burial in a churchyard at death; pilgrimages to local shrines of saints for devotion or healing; springtime Rogation Days processions around agricultural fields for good crops. Far from becoming less pronounced over the course of the Middle Ages, local Christianities and social life became ever more imbricated with each other: in Italian cities, for example, the many urban lay devotional confraternities; the guilds that met in the churches of their patron saints and in processions marched under the saints' banners; the centrality to a city's identity of its single baptistery, where all citizens' children were baptized in a single great ceremony; and (not just in Italy), a civic ideal of the 'good man' or 'good woman' that was, at its heart, the religious ideal of an upright Christian (Pegg, 2001; Thompson, 2005: 15–51, 103–77).

Ironically, one result was the appearance of popular heresy. The topic has generated an immense amount of debate in recent years, with some influential scholars arguing that 'heresy' was mostly an invention of the Church's own fearful imagination. There is a great deal of truth in this; certainly it is hard to deny that the Church itself created the category 'heresy' and ascribed a cohesiveness to heresies that they did not possess (Zerner, 1998). Nonetheless, historians have recently shown more willingness to acknowledge that there really were heretics—self-identified heretics, who knowingly opposed church teachings about the efficacy of infant baptism; the nature of the Eucharist; the need for confession to a priest; the need for the church to have anything to do with marriage; the need for churches at all (Frassetto, 2006). Such heretics first appear in the early eleventh century in Aquitaine and northern Italy. Not surprisingly, they first appear in monastic sources and in regions most pervaded by monastic reforms, for of all churchmen monks were most concerned to police the boundary between the pure and the polluted. But monastic writers did not imagine the heretics. Nor is it true, as is sometimes said, that the first heretics were invariably learned clerics using their knowledge to push against received teachings. Even in the early eleventh century some of the first heretics who appear in sources were lay persons (both men and women), for example, those at Arras in 1025. In any case, sharply distinguishing between clerical heretical leaders and lay followers misses the more important point: clerics were teaching lay people (and sometimes not always teaching orthodoxy), and lay people were listening and learning, and ultimately adapting what they learned and creating new teachings that suited themselves and their values.

p. 53 Unfortunately, the result was a dysfunctional dyad in which each party regenerated the other. The more the Church became concerned with heresy, the more it insisted on orthodoxy. The more it insisted on orthodoxy, the more it insisted on adherence to its teachings. The more the Church insisted on adherence to its teachings, the more precisely it defined the articles of the faith (Pegg, 2001). The more precisely it defined them, the more some laity discovered they simply did not agree. The Church's insistence on faith created the category of heresy; the Church's success in pastoral care created the possibility of heresy. But the way the Church responded created more heresy.

The Church's most infamous response was inquisitions—special commissions authorized by papal delegation to undertake active investigations in regions where heresy was thought to be rife (Given, 1997). Though in principle he was always supposed to act with the advice of other learned clergy, by virtue of his office an inquisitor was able to arrest individuals on grounds of mere suspicion; interrogate them directly and in private; have the suspect tortured if full proof of their heresy were not established (punishment not being permitted by law without full proof or confession); and impose sentences upon them—the harshest being burning alive, but the most common sentence by far some form of fairly lax imprisonment. Since arrest and interrogation depended mostly on suspicion or inherently suspect testimony, inquisitors excelled at recording and even cross-referencing interrogations, enabling them to use witnesses' testimonies not only against others but against the witnesses themselves (when others contradicted their stories). It was the most effective, intrusive practice developed by any government anywhere in the world before the modern

era. One hardly knows what to make of it. On the one hand, wherever inquisitors were consistently appointed heresies were effectively wiped out. On the other hand, inquisitors taught the laity how to cavil and dissemble. They educated the laity about Catholic doctrine, unintentionally calling attention to contradictions and illogicalities that might have otherwise been glossed over. Not least, inquisitions were unpopular: inquisitors were physically assaulted, their agents assaulted or killed, their gaols besieged, their prisoners freed by force.

The Church's more successful response to heresy was first, its greater attention to producing an educated clergy of decent moral life, and second, its authorization of new religious orders founded expressly to combat heresy. The most famous such orders were the Dominicans and Franciscans. Dominicans were never very numerous, since their intellectual training was unusually rigorous. For that very reason they were often appointed inquisitors, and even more often appointed to oversee the burgeoning numbers of informal women's religious communities in Italy and Germany. In contrast, the Franciscans were quite common in cities and towns throughout most of Europe. The order eventually fell into a rancorous quarrel over the meaning of Franciscan poverty and the papacy's power to interpret the rule in ways that were thought to relax its rigours (Burr, 2001). As a result, some Franciscans, later called 'Spirituals', were declared heretics. (Ironically, the best-known text popularizing Franciscan piety, the *Fioretti* or 'The Little Flowers of St Francis', was produced by this group.) Regardless, Franciscans and Dominicans preached—perhaps as many as 250 sermons a year for a single Italian Dominican convent (Kienzle, 2000: 464)—in churches, in church plazas, in confraternities, on the road, against heresy, for civic peace, but above all and most lastingly for a greater integration of Christian principles in the lives of individuals.

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In disseminating a Catholic piety of daily lay life Franciscans only accelerated a trend that existed before them and apart from them. Indeed, Francis himself (c.1181/1182–1226), who began his mission as a lay man, exemplified it. Northern Italy during and after Francis' life was full of informal groupings of lay men and lay women, recognized by Pope Gregory IX (1227–41) in 1227 as 'Brothers and Sisters of Penance'. Living fully in the world, members of these and other like groups married, owned property, and did business; but they also made donations to a common fund used to support the poor, maintain the fabric of the church, and establish hospitals in which the women of the group served. They also practised flagellation, required regular attendance at Mass, and prohibited members from attending private or public events that involved drinking and ribaldry. Their religious commitment was in no way different from that of heretical Waldensians, save that they accepted Church doctrines and made them central to their devotions (Thompson, 2005: 69–102).

One element in the devotions of these groups bears special attention: the requirement that every day all members recite simplified forms of the liturgical office designed for the laity. For illiterate members without books, this included, for each of the seven daily liturgical offices (Matins/Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, Nones, Compline, Vespers), some combination of Our Fathers, Hail Marys, and Glorias, with psalms and, of course, a Creed. The para-liturgical obligations of members literate in at least the vernacular were heavier still and required books. This introduces one of the most interesting aspects of the later Middle Ages: the large number of books circulating in vernaculars to accommodate this more intensive type of lay piety (Griffiths, 2017). These books did not usually include vernacular translations of the Bible: even though such translations were available from the late eleventh century on, both among heretics and the orthodox, neither heretics nor orthodox were particularly interested in them (Boynton and Reilly, 2011). Instead, the most popular vernacular religious books were almost entirely devotional. Thus, there were untold numbers of Books of Hours and 'primers' (the latter simpler vernacular versions of the former) that presented combinations of prayers and psalms for the different Offices of the day to be used in private devotions; though the most famous were luxury items made for elites, not all were, given how widespread such devotions were within confraternities and the populace at large. Then there were devotional books that defy categorization, like the *Lay Folk's Mass Book*, originally written in Anglo-Norman French but translated into

English in the fourteenth century, or the commonplace book written by Robert Reynes in the 1470s (Duffy, 2005: 68–77, 117–23). The *Mass Book* presented all the major stages of the Mass with instructions on when to stand and kneel (and why), explanations of the priest’s prayers and actions and their spiritual meanings, along with prayers that the lay person could say silently during the sequence. Of course a detailed vernacular paraphrase of the Creed featured prominently. As for Reynes (whom later generations might class a simple yeoman), he copied down anything that struck his fancy, but he was especially attracted to mnemonics concerning Church doctrine, versified stories of saints, and above all prayers and religious adages (Shinners, 1997: 335–76):

Serve God truly,  
And the world busily,  
Eat your food merrily,  
If you wish to live.  
Thank God highly,  
Though he keeps you poorly.  
He may amend you lightly,  
Without any grief.

Nothing better illustrates the laity’s wide, constant exposure to Catholic teaching in the later Middle Ages. There was apathy, scepticism, and satire. But there was also sincere belief, committed practice, and a surprising depth of knowledge about Catholic doctrine. By the end of the Middle Ages the Roman Catholic Church had succeeded in educating the faithful about Christianity so well that the faithful could think for themselves about what it meant to be Christian.

## Conclusion

Of all major pre-modern religions, Latin Catholicism was unique in exercising a durable monopoly over an entire subcontinent. That was not true of any other contemporary religion, not even Byzantine Christianity (at least when that empire controlled Asia Minor and the Levant, regions that successfully sustained a number of alternative Christianities as well as thriving Jewish communities). As a result, Catholicism informed every aspect of life, from the ideological justification of secular political authority to the daily sociability of guilds. At every scale every community was not simply a political community or a social community but fundamentally a Catholic community, as villages and cities were topographically anchored by churches and churchyards and knit together by religious ceremonies that occurred in churches and in streets, throughout the year and throughout the course of people’s lives, and Jewish and Muslim populations were not just minorities but *abjected* minorities whose subordination was held to prove the truth of Catholicism. It is not too much to say that the Catholic Church is what gave Western European societies whatever common identity they shared. On the other hand, simply because the Church was coterminous with society, Latin Catholicism could never be uniform. As much as the Church shaped society, local and regional societies shaped and reshaped Catholicism, which, paradoxically, became at once the most universal of religions and the most local. What Latin Catholicism was *not* was monolithic and static. Predicated on contradictions that could not be resolved, it was vibrant and varied, prone in equal measure to crusade and preaching, punishment and forgiveness, faith and inquiry. It was far from a simple religion.

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### CHAPTER

## 4 Religion and Orthodox Eastern Europe, 700–1500

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### Abstract

Taking the Byzantine (East Roman) Empire as its focus, this chapter paints in broad brush strokes the theological developments over the course of eight centuries, from the outbreak of Iconoclasm in the eighth century to the Hesychast debates of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It was from Byzantium that the earliest Christian missionaries spread the Gospel and Byzantine Christian culture to the various Slavic lands. The chapter also includes a note on the role of the Jews and Manichean sects in Orthodox Europe. Overall the chapter argues that it was the Orthodox Church, and especially the Patriarchate of Constantinople, that was the primary creator of culture in Eastern Europe during the Middle Ages.

**Keywords:** [Byzantine Empire](#), [Iconoclasm](#), [Hesychast](#), [Slavic lands](#), [Constantinople](#), [Orthodox Church](#), [Eastern Europe](#)

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DIMITRI Obolensky's *The Byzantine Commonwealth, Eastern Europe 500–1453* (1971) was generally well received when it was first written. More recent scholarship, however, indicates that he overstated the case when he claimed that 'in some respects' the Eastern European countries 'formed a single international community' (Obolensky, 1971: 1).<sup>1</sup> This chapter argues that Obolensky's proposal had a kernel of truth. However, instead of Byzantine culture as a whole creating a unified network, it contends that it was Byzantium's Orthodox Christianity that was the glue that held together the various principalities that covered the territory of modern-day Turkey, Greece, Cyprus, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, Romania, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, south-western Russia, Georgia, and Armenia.<sup>2</sup>

Obolensky is correct in positing that the centre of this religious community was Byzantium, which in 600 included modern-day Turkey, Greece, much of the Middle East, Egypt, coastal North Africa, and parts of Italy and Spain. The Middle East, Egypt, and coastal North Africa were soon lost to the Muslim conquest. Nevertheless, in these areas a rich Orthodox cultural life continued under the Caliphates. Not all doors were open to the Orthodox, but many of them served in the Caliphate's administration and wrote significant theological treatises and liturgical hymns (John of Damascus being the best known). They also translated

important theological, philosophical, medical, astronomical, and mathematical texts from Greek to Syriac to Arabic. Indeed, Orthodox Christians under Muslim rule probably counted for half the entire Christian population during much of the period under consideration, and constituted by far the majority of Eastern Orthodox Christians (Griffith, 2008: 11). That said, and as important as their contributions were to Orthodox religious culture, these Christians will not be covered in a chapter prepared for a *Handbook* concerned primarily with religion in Europe.<sup>3</sup> Rather, the main focus is Byzantium, the scholarly term for the Roman Empire with its capital Constantinople. It was from Constantinople that missionaries were sent out to spread the Gospel in Eastern Europe. Starting from Constantinople as a hub, this chapter will examine how Christianity spread to the various Slavic lands. It will be argued that it was Orthodox Christianity that worked as a leaven in the various peoples to bring about both the development of particular cultures and a sense of unity.

The structure of this chapter is chronological. After a brief presentation of the Byzantine conception of the symphony of the ecclesial and imperial powers, the chapter progresses through the major events and cultural developments of the Orthodox Church as well as its expansion into Slavic-speaking lands. Christian belief and practice were deep and broad in medieval Europe and, it will be argued, were the major factor in the establishment of culture in new territories where Byzantine influence brought about literacy, new forms of art, and the liturgy. Of course, Orthodox Christianity was not the only religious force in medieval Eastern Europe. Orthodoxy's elder sibling Judaism had spread to Eastern Europe with the Roman Empire. Furthermore, syncretistic gnostic groups arose in the Balkans in the middle Byzantine period. Both will be considered towards the end of this chapter. A short conclusion reconsiders the thesis of this chapter that Orthodoxy was the most powerful cultural force in Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages.

## Symphony

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Prior to discussing the history of religion in Byzantium, a few words must be said about the relationship between the Church and imperial authority. In 535 the Emperor Justinian the Great (r. 527–65) wrote a decree about the ordination of bishops, deaconesses and the maintenance of clergy. This decree would soon be enshrined as Justinian's sixth novella. The preface to this novella is important and was to have lasting influence. Although earlier writers, such as Pope Gelasius (492–6), had written on the distinction between the authority of the pontiffs and regal power, Justinian, acknowledging the division, <sup>4</sup> decrees nonetheless that imperial authority and priesthood are interdependent. If both authorities flourish, Justinian argues, there will arise symphony (*consonantia/symphonia*) between the two orders.

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This conception was to have an enormous impact on how the relationship between the state and church was conceived, in that it served as the conceptual framework for particular instances of state intervention in ecclesial concerns, such as the elevation of a patriarch and the calling of councils. Ecclesial intervention in imperial concerns was less frequent and less significant (usually having to do with marriage and imperial succession). The articulation of symphony between the two powers was continued in the *Eisagoge* (also called the *Epanagoge*), an influential although never formally issued law code from 886. In later articulations of symphony such as those found in Leo the Deacon's *History* (late tenth century) and a synodal decision of 1380, symphony between the two powers is seen as something desired more by the Church than by the state. Thus Frederick Lauritzen can say that Byzantium '... has at its core an asymmetry by which the secular authority has a legal say over the religious, while the religious has only a moral authority. It is for this reason the term symphony is rare in Byzantine texts and that it expresses the desire of the Church to have a more practical role in political affairs' (Lauritzen, 2016: 110). At the same time, although the Church did not have much direct legal authority, it had a kind of soft power in its ability to mould characters, promote the expansion of Byzantine literary and artistic culture, and determine family relations by its rulings on marriage, godparents, and inheritance.

## Iconoclasm

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The seventh and eighth centuries are among the least-known periods in Byzantium. Having haemorrhaged half its territory in the Muslim Conquests, Byzantium was adjusting to new circumstances, deprived of the breadbasket of Egypt and North Africa and the pilgrim centre of the Holy Land. The Muslim Conquests, moreover, came hard on the heels of the plague of 530 that may have killed a third of Byzantium.

The focus of Byzantine narrative histories that cover these centuries is on the Iconoclastic Controversy. Iconoclasm means the breaking of icons or images. It is unclear how many images were destroyed or painted over, but the production of new images of Jesus and the saints was outlawed. This became a theological question that centred on the image of Christ. If Christ is God, can the divine aspect be depicted in images? If not, as the iconoclasts argued, in opposition to the iconodules (those who reverence icons), pictures of Christ only convey the human dimension and are therefore false.

Although the origins of this cultural development are obscure, it is unlikely that the rise of Islam and its aniconism influenced the rise of iconoclastic positions within Byzantium (Brubaker and Haldon, 2011: 105–17). Iconoclasm proper is thought to have begun sometime in the summer of 726 when, in perhaps  
p. 63 legendary accounts, 4 Emperor Leo III (r. 717–41) ordered that the image of Christ placed above the Chalke gate—the ceremonial entrance to the Great Palace of Constantinople—be removed and replaced by an image of a naked cross.<sup>4</sup> Iconoclasm waxed and waned for the next century, being official law from around 730 until the Second Council of Nicaea in 787. It was in the middle of the first iconoclastic period that Constantine V Copronymus (r. 741–75) summoned the council of Hiera in 754, which promulgated iconoclastic theology. Constantine V's son Leo IV seems to have been less rigorous in his persecution of Iconodules. Leo IV the Khazar (r. 775–80) reigned for four years before his death, when his son Constantine VI (r. 780–97) succeeded to the throne aged nine. His mother, Irene (who ruled alone 797–802), served as regent. She summoned the Second Council of Nicaea in 787, effectively ending the first period of Iconoclasm.

Although the acts of the iconoclast council of 754 do not survive, the *Horos* or decree survives in the acts of the council of 787. This, along with Constantine V's (741–75) *Peuseis* ('Inquiries'), provides the official theology of the iconoclasts of the period. In the *Peuseis* Constantine argues that Christ's divine nature is uncircumscribable and therefore he ought not be depicted. What would be depicted is merely his human nature. The true image of Christ is the Eucharist (Brubaker and Haldon, 2011: 181). The main theological argument of the *Peuseis* and the *Horos* of 754 is Chalcedonian: one cannot depict Christ because doing so would violate the dogma of 451 that Christ is one *hypostasis* (person) with a human and a divine nature.<sup>5</sup> To depict only the human nature of Christ is to divide the human from the divine and to depict a mere mortal. The *Peuseis* argument about icons of Christ was extended in the *Horos* of 754 to images of saints who, now reigning in glory, would be insulted to have their images depicted in material, for they are now conformed to the radiant glory of Christ (Fogliadini, 2013: 153).

A response to the *Peuseis* came from outside the empire in the work of a Christian living under the caliphate, John of Damascus (Brubaker and Haldon, 2011: 183–5). John argued that God himself chose to become visible: 'I do not venerate matter, but I venerate the creator of matter, who became matter for my sake, who assumed life in the flesh, and who, through matter, accomplished my salvation' (*Oratio I* (PG 94: 1245), translation in Meyendorff, 1974: 46). The very matter of the icon is in a sense holy, because it somehow participates, albeit weakly, in that which it images, and although not worthy of veneration in the same sense as God is, as matter it is worthy of veneration, for all matter has been charged with divine energy and grace (John of Damascus, *de imag. or.* II, 14). John of Damascus, also known as John Damascene (c.675/676–749), further argues that because the Logos was inseparable from the human nature of Christ, when one depicts the unitary *hypostasis* in a painting, one depicts the whole Christ (Brubaker and Haldon, 2011: 186). The

p. 64 theology of John was taken up by the Second Council of  $\hookrightarrow$  Nicaea in 787. The council fathers accepted the distinction John had systematically employed between veneration (*proskynesis*) and worship (*latreia*), the former owed to icons, the latter to the divine nature alone (Second Council of Nicaea: 'Decree on Holy Images', Greek text in Fogliadini, 2015: 24).

Although in one sense settled at the council of 787, the controversy surrounding icons continued, as the military in general were iconoclast, the clergy were fairly evenly divided, and the monks (always an important party in theological and even political debates in Byzantium) were largely iconodule (Schönborn, 1994: 185–92; cf. Meyendorff, 1974: 51). It is important to note that one of the reasons for the first iconoclastic movement was a sense that God was angry at the Roman state for its failure to maintain the purity of the Orthodox faith and he punished Byzantium through natural disasters and military failures (Treadgold, 1997: 352; Brubaker and Haldon, 2011: 367). This was the ostensible reason for the second iconoclastic period, initiated by Leo V the Armenian (r. 813–20), who had taken the throne from the iconodule Michael I Rangabe (r. 811–13), the latter having lost a series of battles to the Bulgarian Khan Krum (r. 803–14).

In 814 Emperor Leo V the Armenian again ordered the removal of the image of Christ above the Chalke gate and replaced it with a cross, just as his predecessor was thought to have done nearly a century earlier (Treadgold, 1997: 432). A further council was called to condemn icons in 815. This period is represented in both the histories and the lives of the saints as having been particularly aggressive in the destruction of icons and the repression of iconodules, especially the monks. The second period of Iconoclasm ended in 843, under the regency of another Empress mother, Theodora (regent 842–55), who insisted that the condemnation of Iconoclasm should not include her husband, the last iconoclast emperor, Theophilus (r. 829–42).

The theological debate over icons centred on the image of Christ, but there were other points in the controversy, including the pagan origins of the symbolic theory of icons, and the use of lifeless material to depict the living saints.<sup>6</sup> The main iconoclast argument was Christological and had two aspects. The first was that an image of Christ must be of the same substance as the prototype—something impossible because of wood and paint's lifeless nature—and could only be realized in the Eucharist. Second, and more penetratingly, a true image of Christ must be able to depict both his humanity and his divinity (a doctrine established at the Council of Chalcedon in 451). An icon is capable of depicting only his human nature, not the divine, and so icons of Christ separate the two undivided and indivisible natures (and thus iconophiles are guilty of a kind of Nestorianism).

p. 65 Iconodules such as John of Damascus and Theodore Stoudite (759–826), responded by arguing that the Incarnation superseded the Old Testament prohibition of images of God. One of the great resisters of Iconoclasm in the ninth century, Theodore of the Stoudios Monastery in Constantinople, established from his exile to the Princes' Islands  $\hookrightarrow$  a circle of monasteries that remained iconophile. He built upon John of Damascus' theology by focusing on the person of Christ in his three *Antirrhetics*. Theodore contributed to the development of the understanding of person (*hypostasis*) by distinguishing it from nature (*physis*) (PG 99. 405 A–B). Only a person can be depicted, an individual person with all of his characteristics, not a nature. It is only in the individual that a nature has any existence. It is through the knowable person that one comes to know the substantial core of a person, the nature or, in the case of Christ, the two natures. The second person of the Trinity circumscribed himself in taking on human flesh 'to such an extent that he could express and communicate himself in a specific individuality ...' (Schönborn, 1994: 223–4).

After much theological and political wrangling, Iconoclasm came to an end when Empress Theodora called together a group of officials and clerics to accept the council of 787, deposed Patriarch John the Grammarian (837–43), and raised Methodius (843–7) to the See on the first Sunday of Lent on 11 March 843 (Treadgold, 1997: 446–7). This became the ceremony of Orthodox Sunday described in the tenth-century *de cerimoniis*

of Constantine VII (Book I, chapter 28). The following decades saw a flurry in the production of images, including the decoration of Hagia Sophia (Mango, 1958: 279–96). In the course of the ninth century, and often in opposition to Western theologians, icons became enshrined at the heart of Orthodox theology and practice.

## New developments in theology and religious culture in the ninth and tenth centuries

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After Iconoclasm other concerns reared their heads. Byzantium reached the zenith of hagiography after Iconoclasm. Written in a more accessible register of Greek, hagiographies (lives of the saints) were widely read and tended to focus on miracles. Miracles are an important aspect of medieval Orthodoxy and thus Photius attributes the salvation of Constantinople from the Rus' in 860 to the intervention of the Theotokos (Mary, the God-bearer) (Homilies three and four in Mango, 1958: 74–110). Other common topoi in medieval Byzantine hagiography include the holy fool, the ideal matron, and the builder of monasteries.

While middlebrow hagiography was reaching its peak and the missionary impetus had already begun, Byzantium was also experiencing a literary and philosophical revival that was not without its impact on its theology (Schreiner, 2011: 17–19). A large component of this renaissance was the renewed attention given to patristic and classical texts. This was in part reflected in compilations such as Photius' *Bibliotheca*. Recent scholarship has attended to the creative element in the assembly of earlier traditions in encyclopedias, identifying, furthermore, a greater originality in texts such as Photius' question and answer *Amphilochia* (Van Deun and Macé, 2011).

p. 66 In the *Amphilochia* and in his commentaries on scripture Photius, who was ordained when nearly fifty, began a new tradition of biblical exegesis among the mainly lay humanist theologians of the following centuries (Podskalsky, 2003: 54–62). Although largely understudied, this area of theological enquiry went through a renaissance. The focus was on the literal sense and the application of rhetorical criteria to evaluate scripture. This was aided by the development of chains of text which put a number of different interpretations of the same text side by side. This tradition was continued by Photius' disciple Arethas of Caesarea (849–post-932) and Michael Psellus (1018–78) and his students in the eleventh century.

## Byzantine missions and the establishment of Slavic ecclesial culture in Great Moravia, Bulgaria, and Russia

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Concurrent with these philological and theological developments, two brothers came to their prime in Thessaloniki, the second city of the Byzantine Empire which bordered the Slavic-speaking lands of Macedonia and Bulgaria. Cyril (his birth name was Constantine and his monastic name Cyril) and Methodius grew up exposed to early Slavic dialects which were spoken, not written languages. Cyril was a polyglot who mastered Hebrew and Aramaic while his brother Methodius was an experienced administrator and head of the Monastery of Polychron (Janin, 1975: 208–9). After a period of study in Constantinople under the future patriarch Photius, Cyril was sent on two state/ecclesial missions, neither of which was particularly successful. In 862 Prince Rastislav (r. 846–70) of Moravia (in the centre of the Balkans, parts of modern-day Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary) requested that Emperor Michael III (r. 842–67) and Patriarch Photius (858–67 and 877–86) send missionaries to evangelize his subjects (*Vita Constantini*, chapter 14). Photius nominated his former student Cyril (826–869) because of his experience in missionary work and his knowledge of Slavic language and culture. Cyril and his brother Methodius (815–85) arrived in Moravia in the autumn of 863.



The impact of Cyril and Methodius was immediate and long lasting. They created an alphabet for writing the language that became Old Church Slavonic, a hybrid language based on spoken Slavonic and the translation of Byzantine liturgy, scripture, and ascetic treatises into the Slavonic language.<sup>7</sup> This was to be the basis for all later expansions of Orthodoxy in Europe. Prince Rastislav's motivations in reaching out to Byzantium for missionaries were in part political, for Great Moravia already had itinerant missionaries from both Byzantium and the West. Indeed, Frankish missionaries had already made significant inroads. Tensions between Rome (dominated by the Franks who were ruled by the descendants of Charlemagne (768–814)) and Constantinople grew around the question of missionaries, territory, papal primacy, and the *filioque* (an addition to the creed added by the Franks to avoid adoptionism). The Franks insisted on adding the *filioque* (that in the life of the Holy Trinity the Spirit proceeds not only from the Father but from the Son as well) to the creed. Pope Leo III (795–816) acknowledged the truth of the *filioque* but resisted its addition to the creed. Its use in the West continued to spread in the ninth century (Siecienski, 2010: 91–109). This along with the papal intervention in the selection of the patriarch of Constantinople became a major issue dividing the two sees. These would be significant questions in the following centuries, especially after the Fourth Crusade (see below).

The followers of Cyril and Methodius continued their work of translation of Greek sources into Old Church Slavonic. Great Moravia, however, decided to invite Frankish missionaries to their country. As a result, the disciples of Cyril and Methodius were dispersed to other regions, including Bulgaria (to the east) where Khan Boris I (r. 852–89) was baptized and forced baptism on his subjects.<sup>8</sup> The disciples shifted their energies and activities to Bulgaria in 885. After some decades of internal resistance, Orthodox Christianity spread and an archbishopric was established, giving Bulgaria a degree of independence from Constantinople. The following century saw the flourishing of Bulgarian culture under the influence and benefaction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, especially in the capital, Preslav, where a school under Emperor Symeon (r. 893–927) flourished and helped transmit the Old Church Slavonic language, translating works such as John Malalas' chronicle and compiling patristic florilegia on scripture.<sup>9</sup> In 1014, however, Bulgaria became a province of Byzantium under Basil the Bulgar-slayer. The Patriarchate of Ohrid was demoted to an archbishopric although it remained autocephalous (Vlasto, 1970: 181). And bit by bit, the culture of Bulgaria was transformed as Greek language and culture were imposed by Byzantium and Greek bishops were appointed to the see of Ohrid.

Repressed in Bulgaria, the Old Church Slavonic translations and the establishment of Slavic written culture would serve as the foundation for ecclesial and intellectual life in Russia. The earliest record of Christians in Rus' comes shortly after the 860 attack on Constantinople.<sup>10</sup> In an 867 encyclical Photius refers to the Russians following the Bulgarians in turning to Christ shortly after 863 (Laourdas and Westerink, 1983: 50). He sends the Rus' a bishop, just as he had sent one to the Bulgarians (Laourdas and Westerink, 1983: 49–51). The effect was not to endure, for the entire nation did not convert from its worship of Thor, although a sizeable minority seems to have become Christian in Kyiv by 945 (Kyiv is in modern-day Ukraine but constitutes the heart of the Rus'). The *Primary Chronicle* records that the Russo-Byzantine Treaty between Igor the Old (r. 914–45) and Emperor Romanos I Lekapenos (r. 920–44), conducted in Kyiv, was ratified by both Christians and pagans. Furthermore, the Cathedral Church of St Elijah is mentioned in the same passage.<sup>11</sup>

The beginnings of a change can be seen in 957 when the Regent of the Kyivan Rus', St Olga of Kyiv (r. 945–60), wife of the abovementioned Igor, came to Constantinople and was baptized, taking the name Helena. Helena built the Cathedral of Holy Wisdom in Kyiv (Hagia Sophia, named after the main church of Constantinople). Her son Prince Sviatoslav I Igorevich (r. 963–72) refused to become a Christian, saying 'my *druzhina* will laugh at me [if I become a Christian]' because 'to the infidels the Christian faith is foolishness' (Vlasto, 1970: 251, translation of *Primary Chronicle* 83 (955)). Although he refused baptism, Sviatoslav does not seem to have persecuted Christianity, and in this can be seen an opening to Christianity.



The aperture was widened when his son Prince Yaropolk I Sviatoslavich of Kyiv (r. 972–80) married a Greek Christian and was more conciliatory towards Christianity although there is no record of his baptism.

Civil war erupted between Yaropolk and Prince Vladimir Sviatoslavich (the Great) (r. 980–1015) after the death of their father. At this point Yaropolk seems to have been only semi-Christian and Vladimir completely pagan. According to the *Primary Chronicle* Vladimir was the ruler of Kyiv by 978 and set up idols and made human sacrifices (Cross and Sherbowitz-Wetzors, 1953: *Primary Chronicle*, 980: 93). Sometime after 983 Vladimir realized that his neighbours were all accepting Christianity (or at least some form of monotheism).<sup>12</sup> The *Primary Chronicle* of 986 records the visits of Jews, Muslims, Western Christians, and Greek Christians, none of whom were fully convincing, although he inclined towards the Greeks. Vladimir then decided to send out envoys to the various faiths. The envoys visited Bulgars in their mosque, the Germans in their church, and finally Tsargrad (Constantinople), where they witnessed the liturgy in the Hagia Sophia:

the Greeks led us to the edifices where they worship their God, and we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendour or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We only know that God dwells there among men, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations. ↪ For we cannot forget that beauty.

(Cross and Sherbowitz-Wetzors, 1953: *Primary Chronicle*, 987: 111)

After this report Vladimir sought baptism, baptized his twelve sons and boyars, destroyed the statues of the Slavic gods, baptized most of Kyiv and built up a rudimentary educational system, having boys instructed in Old Church Slavonic, probably by Bulgarians (*Primary Chronicle*, 988). As in Bulgaria, the Church's cultural influence is clear. He imported artisans from Byzantium to build the Tithe Church, the first stone church in Russia that was also decorated with mosaics.<sup>13</sup> In the meantime Vladimir and his successors fostered the translation of Greek liturgical and ascetical texts:<sup>14</sup> 'Byzantium brought to Russia five gifts: her religion, her law, her view of the world, her art and writing' (Sumner, 1967: 157). Throughout this period there was a heavy Greek influence: of twenty-three metropolitans at least seventeen were Greek. These metropolitans travelled back and forth between Constantinople and Kyiv, bringing artists, icons, vestments, and books with them. In the fourteenth century, Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos (1353–4 and 1364–76) would write on establishing metropolitans and bishops among the Rus': 'Our humility chooses the best among men, the most eminent in virtue, establishes them and ordains them as pastors, teachers and high priests, and send them to the ends of the universe.'<sup>15</sup> Constantinople might be considered the hub from which texts, art, liturgy, teachers, and clerics went out throughout Eastern Europe, bringing not only Orthodoxy, but an entire religious and social culture with it.

## The schism of 1054 and the Fourth Crusade

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Southern Italy had been settled by Greeks by the eighth century BCE and for nearly two millennia Greek culture and ties to the East became a part of the social fabric. In the eleventh century CE the local population continued to speak Greek and were more closely connected with Constantinople than with Rome, especially in liturgical practice. When the Normans conquered Southern Italy they attempted to impose aspects of the Latin liturgy, including the use of azyma, or unleavened bread in the Eucharist. ↵ This led to a dispute and brought the difference between Greek and Latin practices to the attention of Pope Leo IX (1049–54) who sent a small delegation led by Cardinal Humbert of Moyenmoutier (c.1000/1015–61) to Constantinople to discuss the azyma in 1054. Humbert soon realized that there were a number of differences between Latin and Greek practice and theology. Some Greeks held that the Latin Eucharist was invalid, others that Latin baptisms were invalid and must be repeated, and most held the Latin *filioque* was a heretical addition to the creed said at liturgy every Sunday. Other differences included the celibacy requirement for lower clergy among the Latins and their habit of shaving.

In the course of his discussions with Patriarch Michael I Cerularius (1043–59), Humbert insisted that the Greeks adjust to Latin practice. Michael resisted and tensions developed. On 16 July Humbert placed a bull of personal excommunication of Michael, Archbishop Leo of Ohrid (d. 1056), and their followers on the altar of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. Michael responded not by excommunicating the pope but by drawing up a list of Latin errors (Chadwick, 2003: 212). The excommunication meant the further estrangement of Byzantium and therefore of the entire Orthodox Commonwealth from Rome, although it was not necessarily a complete schism. In the words of Henry Chadwick, ‘The events of 1053–4 were more symptomatic of a state of mind than a primary cause’ (Chadwick, 2003: 218).

Rather than the estrangement brought about by Cardinal Humbert’s legation, it was the Fourth Crusade (1202–4) that was the definitive break between East and West. Called by Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) to regain Muslim-held Jerusalem, the crusading knights were diverted to Constantinople by their Venetian ferrymen who demanded payment for their services and Alexius IV Angelos (r. 1203–4) who agreed to pay the knights 200,000 silver marks if they would install him as the Emperor of Byzantium (Treadgold, 1997: 663). After Alexius IV had taken the throne as co-emperor with his blind father Isaac II Angelos (r. 1185–95 and 1203–4), he found himself unable to pay the crusaders. In January 1204 Isaac II died and Alexius IV was murdered. They were succeeded by Alexius V (r. 1204) who still had to pay the crusaders the remaining 90,000 silver marks they were owed. The crusaders grew restless and assaulted the city in April, breaking through the walls on 13 April. They looted the city and carried home booty worth 900,000 marks. They installed a Latin emperor and patriarch and attempted to impose Latin liturgical and ecclesial practices on the Byzantines. The sacking of their capital by their brothers in Christ and the imposition of a Latin patriarch on them led to an upsurge in anti-Latin sentiment among the Byzantines (Demacopoulos, 2019). A strong anti-Latin position can be seen in a number of Greek texts from the thirteenth century, including Demetrius Chomatianus’ collecting of rulings on canon law and in a number of other figures such as Patriarch Joseph I of Constantinople (1266–75 and 1282–3), Nicephorus Blemmydes (1197–1272), and the followers of Arsenius (Patriarch of Constantinople, 1261–5). Anti-Latin feeling, especially in the Church, would continue to rise through the last two centuries of Byzantium.

## Hesychasm and the definition of orthodox doctrine

The greatest theological and cultural event after the Fourth Crusade is the development of Hesychasm and its defence by Gregory Palamas (c.1296–c.1357/1359), an intellectual monk from Mount Athos, in the fourteenth century.<sup>16</sup> Hesychasm, meaning silence, had been the goal of monks since at least the fifth century.<sup>17</sup> The goal of Hesychasm is contemplation of and union with God in prayer. Although there are earlier witnesses to the resurgence of Hesychasm, as a practice it was revived on Mount Athos in the fourteenth century by Gregory of Sinai (c.1260–1346). After living at St Catherine's Monastery on Mt Sinai for some time Gregory moved to Crete where he met a monk named Arsenius. Gregory told Arsenius that he has been seeking contemplation. Arsenius replied 'But what you've done, my son, is defined exactly as practice (praxis) by the holy theophoric fathers and our teachers but not contemplation (*theoria*).'<sup>18</sup> Arsenius taught Gregory the ancient practice of Hesychasm in which contemplation is the fruit of asceticism. The practice involves repeating the Jesus prayer, 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' The method is a prayer of the heart without images combined with a controlled breathing. '[O]ver time this refrain becomes as instinctive as breathing for the practitioner, and enables the person to live with his or her consciousness continually centred on God, with an almost physical sense of God's indwelling' (Daley, 2013: 351). The contemplation was a vision of the divine light, the same as that seen at Mt Tabor in the Transfiguration of our Lord (Matthew 17:1–8; Mark 9:2–8; Luke 9:28–36; and referred to in 2 Peter 1:16–18).

Having mastered this practice and come to experience the divine light and the concomitant deification, Gregory moved to Mount Athos where he met three monks 'who were not dedicated to works of practice but even if a little bit, had undertaken the work of contemplation' (Pomjalovskij, 1894: 10.17–23, my translation from the Greek). Gregory then settled in a *skete* (a small monastic community) and gathered a number of disciples around him. After Turkish incursions he fled to south-eastern Bulgaria where he established a monastery. His teaching was codified in his homily on the Transfiguration and his chapters in acrostich, a poem in which the first letter of each line spells out a word or even sentences.<sup>19</sup> It was from here, more specifically the daughter house of Kilifarevo, that Hesychasm spread to Slavic lands especially after its defence by Palamas.

p. 72 The Hesychast monks make the astounding assertion of being able to know God not only in the next life but in this life. Their claim was bound to stir up controversy and the first to respond to them was the Greek-speaking Calabrian monk named Barlaam who argued that God is totally unknowable except indirectly through 'revealed Scripture, induction from creation, or exceptional mystical revelations' (Meyendorff, 1974, 76). Barlaam argued that the light on Mt Tabor was created and called the Hesychasts *omphalopsychoi*, 'souls in their navels' because of their practice of controlled breathing in a posture where the head faces downward and inward.

Gregory Palamas rose up to defend the Athonite Hesychasts. Palamas drew on the fourth-century Cappadocian fathers who had argued against Eunomius of Cyzica (c.393) that God's essence is inaccessible but not his activities.<sup>20</sup> Palamas develops this thought, distinguishing between the divine substance (*ousia*, God in himself) and divine energies (*energeiai* or *dynameis*), which are at work in the world and are manifested to human beings but are uncreated manifestations of God's unceasing work. The encounter with God's energies or activities brings about *theosis*: through the divine life given in energies we become capable of becoming divine, gods, or attaining communion with God. This is possible because of the divine transformation of human nature that occurred in the Incarnation. Hesychast theology and its embodiment in practices of prayer and new art forms was to have an enormous influence on Eastern Europe from the middle of the fourteenth century until the present day.

## The final century of Byzantium: the spread of Hesychasm and the fall of Constantinople

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Palamas' position was enshrined as Orthodox doctrine in a series of councils held at Constantinople between 1341 and 1351. A final seal was set at a council of 1368 that canonized Palamas. At the same time the spread of Hesychasm among the Slavic nations continued. This was initiated by Theodosios of Tarnovo, a disciple of Gregory of Sinai, who founded the Kilifarevo Monastery near the then Bulgarian capital of Tarnovo. The spread of Hesychasm was furthered by Euthymios, the main assistant of Theodosios at Kilifarevo, who became the Bulgarian patriarch (Obolensky, 1971: 336–9). St Romil/Roman of Vidin (d. 1375), a disciple of Theodosios promulgated Hesychasm in northern Serbia. Meanwhile Nicodemos (d. 1406) brought Hesychasm to Wallachia, establishing the monasteries of Vodița and Tismana. It was not only the practice and theory of Hesychasm that was spread throughout the Balkans and Russia. Hesychasm was an entire religious culture, and its dissemination involved images, especially of the Transfiguration. The spread of Hesychastic art from Byzantium can especially be seen in Russia. Theophanes the Greek, who had decorated churches in Constantinople and Chalcedon, for instance, eventually moved to northern Russia where he painted the Church of the Transfiguration in Novgorod in 1378, which is still preserved. Among his students was Andrei Rublev.

At the same time that Hesychasm was flourishing, Russia had freed herself from the Mongol yoke that had oppressed her for over a century. Constantinople reasserted its leadership role, and thus the patriarch presented himself as the 'universal teacher of all Christians'.<sup>21</sup> But traffic was not simply one-directional. Many Russians came to Constantinople and established settlements in the city or visited the various shrines.

It was not only Byzantium that was influencing the newly freed Russians: Serbian and Bulgarian monks made a deep impact on the religious and literary culture of Russia. At this time Bulgaria was a centre for intellectual Hesychasm. There monks carried on the work of translation of Byzantine liturgical and ascetical texts, especially Hesychastic texts. This was not the technical disputation of Palamas and his disciples but the ascetic and spiritual writings of the Hesychastic tradition. At the same time there was an increased Slavic presence on Mount Athos, binding together more tightly the Greek and Slavic Christian worlds.

The revival of Russian monasticism was especially encouraged by St Sergius of Radonezh (1314–92) who established the Great Lavra of Holy Trinity outside Moscow in 1355. He corresponded with Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos of Constantinople, a disciple of Gregory Palamas, about the rule of life of his monastery. Hesychasm was restored by Nil Sorsky (1433–1508) who knew the earlier sources of Hesychasm in addition to the fourteenth-century texts. Like St Sava, Nil had spent time on Mount Athos and it was there that he became adept at Hesychastic practice and steeped in Hesychast literature. He practised a semi-eremetical life, 'enabling the monk to combine obedience to his superior with dedication to perpetual prayer' (Obolensky, 1971: 307). The growth of monasticism and the growth of Christianity in Russia in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries was astounding: 'During the second half of the fourteenth century and the first decades of the fifteenth over 150 new monasteries were founded in the forests of northern Russia' (Meyendorff, 1981: 132).

It was in Russia that the Byzantine tradition was to be preserved and developed for Byzantium did not have much time. On 29 May 1453, Constantinople fell to the Turks. The sense in which this was experienced as a calamity, especially in the Orthodox world, can be seen in both Russian and Greek sources. The Queen City had become a slave, in the phrase of Andronicus Callistus (1400–86).<sup>22</sup> This calamity seemed 'to be the greatest that ever took place throughout the world in its excess of suffering, similar to the fall of Troy' (Laonikos Chalkokondyles 8.30 (Vol. II, 206–7)). The Turks soon conquered much of the Balkans, leading to two different experiences of Orthodoxy after 1453: that of Russia and its territories and that of the existence of Orthodox Christians as *dhimmi* or a protected minority of not-quite citizens under the Turks.

## Heretics and Jews

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Of course, not everyone in Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages was an Orthodox Christian. Two groups lived on the margins of society and they must receive some, if rather cursory, attention in this survey of religion in the Orthodox Commonwealth. The first heretical Christians in the Byzantine period were the warlike Paulicians. A large number of Paulicians were resettled in Thrace from Armenia in the eighth century (Hamilton, Hamilton, and Stoyanov, 1998: 56–7). The eastern Paulicians revolted against the Byzantine Empire in the ninth century and were seen as a threat to the stability of the eastern part of the empire. Collaborators with Muslims, they went as far west as to sack Ephesus in 869 (Obolensky, 1991).

Possessing a deep acquaintance with scripture, the Paulicians were Iconoclasts (Obolensky, 1947: 194). Mitigated dualists, they believed not in an omnipotent God but rather that there are two elementary powers, good and evil, in combat with each other. The Paulicians held public disputations and practised their religion openly. This led to conflicts with Byzantium and resettlement. Unlike the later Bogomils, they seem to have retained their distinctive teachings.

A mysterious figure, Pop (priest) Bogomil, seems, at least to contemporary Orthodox authors, to have combined Paulician teachings with Messalianism in Bulgaria in the tenth century (Obolensky, 1991). Bogomils denied the Incarnation and held that the world is in the thrall of the Devil (cf. John 14:30 and 2 Corinthians 4:4). Select members were to abstain from sexual intercourse, wine, and meat. Although they seemed at first to have practised peaceful civil disobedience in Bulgaria, this tendency soon waned. Flourishing in Bulgaria and the Balkans, Bogomilism came to Constantinople and western Asia Minor by the eleventh century (Obolensky, 1947: 183–98). Perhaps because, unlike the Paulicians, the Bogomils went underground, participating in Orthodox liturgies and publicly professing the Orthodox faith, they absorbed in time a variety of teachings from other sects (Obolensky, 1947: 196). Bogomilism seems to have declined in the fourteenth century, possibly because of the spread of Hesychasm. There is no record of Bogomolism after the Turkish conquest (Obolensky, 1971: 255).

p. 75 The experience of Jews differed from place to place and time to time in medieval Europe. In Byzantium their living conditions were distinct from those in the West, bearing in mind that documentary evidence for the Jewish experience in Byzantium is largely derived from Orthodox Christian authors and law codes (Troianos, 2011: 133–48). Thus, for instance, we have several dialogues between a Christian and a Jew, all written by Christians (Congourdeau, 2011: 709–11). We know, however that Jews had freedom of movement in all major cities and engaged in a variety of occupations.<sup>23</sup> The Jewish population was centred in cities such as Constantinople and Thessaloniki. The Hebraike quarter was usually located near a city's market and Jews worked in a number of trades, from tanners to translators and physicians (Sharf, 1971: 16). Autonomy was given in religious and social affairs. Jews were largely assimilated, although there was some social isolation in part because of the discriminatory laws of Byzantium and in part because of the Rabbis, who were 'appointed with government's consent' (Bowman, 1991: 1041).

The Byzantine Church opposed forced baptisms (though this occurred under Justinian (r. 527–65), Heraclius (r. 610–41), Leo III the Isaurian (r. 717–41), Basil I the Macedonian (r. 867–86), and Leo VI the Wise (r. 886–912)). In general, the Byzantine relationship to Jews was not the brutal oppression widely experienced in the West but rather they were treated as a protected, if exploited, religious minority (Sharf, 1971: 198). It is not clear if there was a Byzantine Jewish tax, although there were a number of limitations on their finances: they were prohibited from owning slaves and they had to serve on the decurionate according to the Code of Theodosius (438) (Sharf, 1971: 189).

Jews maintained autonomy in Byzantine Israel and were, in some ways, assimilated in the Byzantine diaspora where they were autonomous only in religious and social questions. At the same time, Jews in the

diaspora resisted acculturation that would have erased them from history. What Andrew Sharf said of the Jews from the fourth century to the thirteenth can be extended to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries:

Better off than in the West, worse off than under Islām, usually secure, occasionally threatened, potentially receptive to the culture around them but a very long way from assimilation, enjoying a legal but explicitly inferior status, the Jews in Byzantium of our period constituted in various ways and in their various communities at once a link and a dividing line both between the East and the West and between the classical and the medieval world – just as, in a different way, did Byzantium itself.

(Sharf, 1971: 198–9)

## Conclusion

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This chapter’s chronological approach may give the impression of having provided an overview of the entire history and range of religion in Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages. It has not. Instead by attending to the major theological and ecclesiological events in the Patriarchate of Constantinople and their repercussions in broader society as well as its missionary activities in the Slavic lands, this chapter has argued, with Obolensky, that Orthodox Christianity was the primary cultural force in Medieval Eastern Europe ↴ and that, to a certain extent, it bound the various Orthodox kingdoms and empires together (Obolensky, 1971). Certainly, Anthony Kaldellis is correct to emphasize the distinctive Roman inheritance of the Byzantines that distinguished them from the other Orthodox kingdoms and yet this chapter has argued that the boundaries between those kingdoms were porous, at least for Orthodox religious thought and practice (Kaldellis, 2015). At the same time, Orthodoxy was not the only religious agent at work in the Middle Ages; thus, the chapter concludes with a short note on two religious minorities, the legal communities of Jews and the illegal and persecuted gnostic sects, which also had a cultural influence, but one that was markedly more circumscribed than Orthodox Christianity.



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## Notes

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- 1 For trenchant criticism of Obolensky's thesis see Kaldellis, 2007: 109–10.
- 2 In a way, then, the drift of this chapter might at first glance be seen as opposed to Anthony Kaldellis' compelling argument that the glue of Byzantine society was its Roman identity but it is in fact complementary (see Kaldellis, 2007: 42–119; 2015). While the Byzantines understood themselves as being essentially Roman, they also understood themselves as bound to other Eastern Europeans by their shared faith and the Christian patrimony that was filtered through Old Church Slavonic. That '[t]he Byzantines did not accept as Romans the orthodox people who lived outside their borders, but instead looked down on them as barbarians' may be true, but that does not mean that a sense of Christian fraternity could not be combined with cultural and political snobbery (Kaldellis, 2007: 75).
- 3 Christianity flourished in other areas in the ancient and medieval world, for example Georgia, Armenia, Central Asia, China, India, and Ethiopia. These too will not be covered in this chapter.
- 4 See Treadgold, 1997: 352 ff for the episode. See also Brubaker and Haldon, 2011: 128–35 for a reconsideration of the episode. Theophanes 405 (Mango and Scott, 1997: 559 ff) V. Steph. Iun. 100. 17ff. *De SS. Martyribus Constantinopolitanis in Acta Sanctorum. Aug. ii, 434–447 (Acta Gregorii spatharii)* (Halkin, F. 1957. *Bibliotheca hagiographica graeca* 3 Vol., 1195). Iadevaia, 1987: 64.
- 5 Fogliadini, 2013: 116–18. For the text see Mansi 1901–27: XIII 252 AB, 256 AB.
- 6 For the pagan sense of icons as symbols of the realities they portray see the overview in Alexander, 1958: 23–39.
- 7 See Vlasto, 1970: 57–66 and 78–9 for a discussion of the texts translated by Cyril and Methodius.
- 8 For an account of the most famous of Cyril and Methodius' disciples, Clement of Ohrid, see Obolensky, 1988: 8–33. He was made bishop by Symeon in 893. The event of Christianity becoming the official religion of Bulgaria in 864 was a surprise to the Byzantines. See Photius epistle 2, lines 47–51; the same point is made by Theophylact two and a half centuries later, *Patrologia Graeca* 121.200.

- 9 See Nikov, 2011. For an overview of Bulgarian and Serbian theological literature, see Podskalsky, 2000.
- 10 For the attack of 860 see Vasiliev, 1946. See also Mango, 1958: 74–82.
- 11 See note 53 (p. 238). See also Vlasto, 1970: 247–50.
- 12 Shortly after this time, for instance, Vladimir’s good friend the Norwegian Viking Olaf Tryggvason had become an ardent Christian and king of Norway in 995, establishing the first bishopric in Nidaros.
- 13 *Primary Chronicle*, 989. See Vlasto, 1970: 262. See also the story of the construction of the magnificent church of Hagia Sophia in Kyiv in 1037 where again Greek artisans were brought in to build with stone and decorate with mosaics and frescoes.
- 14 Meyendorff, 1981: 17–23. See also *Primary Chronicle*, 1037. For the lack of humanistic texts translated into OCS in Rus’, see Podskalsky, 1982: 75 with references.
- 15 Meyendorff, 1981: 19. See also 85–91. For later movements of Byzantine texts to Russia see 119–44. Translation in Meyendorff, 1981: 283–4.
- 16 Gregory Palamas was born in 1296 of an aristocratic family in Constantinople and went to Mount Athos in 1316 after receiving a thorough education.
- 17 The early roots can be found in the writings of Pseudo-Makarios. It is developed by Symeon the New Theologian in the tenth century. See also Justinian I, *Novella* 5.3.
- 18 Pomjalovskij 9.18–21, cited in Rigo, 2001: 47–8, my translation from Italian.
- 19 For an English translation of the homily see Daley, 2013: 325–49.
- 20 Although the idea of a development of doctrine has been rejected by, among others, Andrew Louth (2005), it does seem to be an integral part of the Orthodox theological tradition. See, among others, Gregory the Theologian, *Oration* 31.26–27; Photios *Bibliotheca* codex 1; Gregory Palamas in *Patrologia Graeca* 151.722B.
- 21 Letter of Patriarch Anthony IV of Constantinople (1389–90 and 1391–7) to Grand-Prince Vasily I of Moscow (r. 1389–1425) in *MM* 2.189. My translation of the Greek.
- 22 ‘...καὶ δούλη, φεῦ, ἡ βασιλὶς ἐγγόνει ...’ Andronicus Callistus, ‘Monody on the ill fate of Constantinople,’ in Pertusi, 1976, Vol., 2: 360, lines 53–4. My translation.
- 23 Sharf, 1971: 116. Moneylending was legal in Byzantium and so Jews were not associated with it as in the West.

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CHAPTER

## 5 Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in Medieval Europe

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### Abstract

This chapter discusses the interaction between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in medieval Europe. It considers the importance of Augustine's doctrine of Jews as 'witnesses' to Christian truth in the formation of the medieval image of the 'hermeneutical Jew'. Jews, who lived primarily in the Islamic world in the first millennium, began to migrate into Christian lands in greater numbers from the eleventh century. As Christian ideas about Judaism evolved in the twelfth century, culminating in the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, Jewish authors responded with detailed critiques of Christian belief. The simultaneous Christian engagement with Muslim sources led to a triangular encounter, especially significant in the Iberian Peninsula, between Jewish, Christian, and Muslim writers, reflected in numerous dialogues and polemics about prophecy and history. Beginning in the thirteenth century, mendicant friars, including converts, played a greater role in engagement with Islam and Judaism, taking on important roles as translators and inquisitors.

**Keywords:** Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Middle Ages, Augustine, Fourth Lateran Council, mendicant orders, polemics, conversion, Iberian Peninsula

**Subject:** History of Religion, Religion

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IN 1339, there appeared in Paris the Latin work *Epistola rabbi Samuel de Fez de aduentu Messiae missa ad rabbi Isaac* (Letter of Rabbi Samuel of Fez to Rabbi Isaac about the Coming of the Messiah), which takes the form of letters between two rabbis in Morocco who explore and ultimately affirm the truth of the Christian religion. The work became the most widely known anti-Jewish polemic in Europe in the later Middle Ages, surviving in hundreds of manuscripts and many editions. Yet curiously, its preface states that the Latin text is not original, but was instead translated from Arabic (Alfonsi Bonihominis, 2020: 71). The purported 'translator', a Dominican friar named Alfonso Buenhombre (or Bonihomnis, d. c.1353), makes the same claim for most of his works, alleging that his writings were translations of Arabic texts that had long been hidden by Jews. As he says in his later work *Disputatio Abutalib Sarraceni et Samuelis Iudei* (Disputation of Abutalib the Sarracen and Samuel the Jew), these works fortuitously 'came into my hands ... while in the captivity of the Saracens' (Alfonsi Bonihominis, 2020: 123; Szpiech, 2013b: 170). Despite his claims, however, the content of the works reveals them to be his own compositions.

It is significant that Buenhombre seeks to establish the authenticity of his Christian anti-Jewish polemic by appealing to a foreign, Arabic pedigree. It is equally striking that the *Epistola* circulated so widely throughout Europe, being copied and read by multitudes of Christian readers who rarely, if ever, crossed paths with real Jews or Muslims. This example underscores the fact that Christian thinking about Judaism was not simplistic or static, but instead evolved as times changed. While Judaism has played an important role in Christian thought and belief since the very origins of Christianity, Christian ideas about Judaism were shaped both by internal shifts in ecclesiastical governance and structure as well as by external shifts in social, political, and economic circumstances. The collapse of the Roman Empire in the fifth century opened a window of opportunity for Christianity's expanding role as a force of continuity and social organization in the early Middle Ages. However, the rise of Islam in the seventh century affected the course of that expansion in multiple, very distinctive, ways. Islamic civilization not only provided a context for the growth of Jewish settlements in the Mediterranean but also eventually pressured Christian thinking about prophecy and salvation to develop in new directions. After the twelfth century, Christian thought sometimes came to engage with Judaism in ways that included Islamic thought as well.

This chapter examines relations between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in medieval Europe, focusing on the ways that religious ideas intersected with and influenced notions of history and society. The story of this interaction is a multifaceted one, unfolding as much in the realm of political, social, and economic thought as in that of theology. To comprehend the history of interaction between these groups, it is important to go beyond a summary of their conflicts and cooperation and take into account the theological understandings that often determined these interactions.

## Jews real and imagined

The relationship between Judaism and Christianity throughout the Middle Ages was founded upon the language of the New Testament itself. The condemnation of Pharisaic literalism and the calls to embrace a 'new covenant' that 'has made the first one obsolete' (Hebrews 8:13) provided a foundation for the ecclesiastical doctrine of Supersessionism, which holds that Christianity has inherited the status of God's chosen people, the True Israel, by keeping the faith that Judaism failed to uphold (Reuther, 1974: 164, 239). Yet this doctrine posed the challenge for Patristic authors of how to accept the truth of the old law while also justifying its replacement. This issue was addressed by Augustine of Hippo (d. 430), who elaborated the exegetical notion that earlier Scriptures were 'figures' (*figurae*) of later ones. To read such signs required not only a literal view of history but also a symbolic and 'spiritual' understanding. From this perspective, Christians came to characterize Jewish thought, focused on the history of the Jewish people, as 'carnal' and earthbound and Jews as blind to the true, figural meaning of their own books. This caricature was repeated for centuries in Christian theology and was expressed in the iconography of *Ecclesia* (Church) and *Synagoga* (Synagogue)—both depicted as fair women, but with the former shown triumphant and the latter blindfolded and crestfallen (Schreckenberg, 1996: 32–63).

In elaborating this Christian exegetical theory, Augustine gave definitive form to what Jeremy Cohen and others have termed the 'hermeneutical Jew', the medieval view of Jews as necessary but inferior readers and copiers of Hebrew Scripture (Cohen, 1999: 2–3). This notion became widespread in subsequent centuries, when Jews were likened to 'scribes' (*notarii*), 'book-carrying slaves' (*capsarii*), 'guardians' (*custodes*), 'librarians' (*librarii*), or 'archivists' (*scriniarii*)—all figures who copy or protect books without themselves reading or understanding them (36, 235). The exegetical notion of the 'hermeneutical Jew' remained a common topos in Western Christian thought throughout the Middle Ages (Dahan, 1990: 585; Cohen, 1999: 15) and historians have demonstrated that its traces are still perceptible in modern debates about idealism, legalism, capitalism, and materialism (Nirenberg, 2013: 6).

Augustine argued, moreover, that Jews are not only poor readers of Scripture, but are also valuable ‘witnesses’ to a truth that they themselves are incapable of comprehending. This theory had implications for Christian policies concerning real Jews living in Christian lands in subsequent centuries. Augustine’s reading of Psalm 59:11 (numbered 58:12 in the Septuagint and the Vulgate, ‘Slay them not lest at any time they forget your law’) came to provide a template for how to understand the doctrine of ‘Jewish witness’ in practical terms (Fredriksen, 2008: 349). This verse would be cited seven centuries later by the French abbot Bernard of Clairvaux, in the context of the Second Crusade to claim the Holy Land from Muslim control. In a letter of 1146, Bernard urges fellow Christians to ‘take up arms in zeal for the Christian name’ but at the same time recalls the atrocities that occurred in the context of the First Crusade when, in 1096, Christian crusaders killed many hundreds of Jews in the Rhineland (Eidenberg, 1977: 13–14). Bernard thus cautions that, ‘the Jews must not be persecuted, slaughtered, nor even driven out ... I know what is written in the Psalms as prophecy about the Jews ... They are living signs (*vivi apices*) for us, representing the Lord’s passion’ (Allen and Amt, 2014: 127). Bernard’s words testify to the enduring legacy of Augustine’s exegetical stance towards Judaism in medieval Christian thought.

The Augustinian call to ‘slay them not’ also came to have a direct impact on the statutes concerning Jews in canon law. In June 598, Pope Gregory I the Great (590–604) wrote to Victor, Bishop of Palermo, responding to reports of forcible conversion of Jews in Sicily. Paraphrasing the Theodosian code (16.8.18), he urged that ‘Just as the Jews should not (*sicut Iudaeis non*) have license to do in their synagogues more than the law permits, so they should suffer no limitation on what they are allowed to do’ (Grayzel, 1966: 1:93; Stow, 1999: 216). This statement, known by its opening words ‘*sicut Iudaeis non*’, was repeated in a bull by Pope Calixtus II (1119–24) in 1120 and then again by more than a dozen popes from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries. Sometimes called the *Constitutio pro iudaeis* (Regulation on Behalf of the Jews), it was incorporated into the *Decretum* of Gratian—a foundational work of Western canon law that first appeared around 1140—providing a legal expression of the theological doctrine of toleration that can be traced back to Gregory (Dahan, 1990: 114).

Although the doctrine expressed in *Sicut Iudaeis non* became a norm in medieval thought, it was not equally influential in all places. In Visigothic Iberia, for example, existing policies about Jews and Judaism in Christian society were notably more hostile than elsewhere in Europe. St Leander (d. 601), bishop of Seville, convened the Third Council of Toledo in 589, which barred Jews from public offices of power over Christians, prohibited them from having Christian wives or slaves, and decreed that children with at least one Christian parent were required to be baptized (Vives, 1963: 129, 135). Two decades after Gregory’s pronouncement, King Sisebut (c.565–621) ordered the forcible baptism of all Jews in his kingdom. At the Fourth Council of Toledo of 633, overseen by Leander’s brother, Bishop Isidore of Seville (d. 636), earlier forced baptisms were upheld as valid and binding, although future ones were forbidden (Vives, 1963: 211). Isidore’s work *De fide catholica contra Iudaeos* (On the Christian Faith against the Jews), which became very well known in Latin Europe, was harshly critical of Jewish faith (Cohen, 1999: 97). Together, the disparate stances of Gregory and Isidore exemplify the contradictory ideals inherited as part of the Augustinian legacy.

## Between Muslim and Christian rule

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One of the most striking elements of Jewish–Christian contact in medieval Europe is the great disparity between the ubiquitous presence of Judaism in Christian theological writing and the overall scarcity of real Jews in Christian lands. Judaism existed as a figure of Christian thought more than a reality in Christian daily life. Most Jewish communities in Europe were very small and not always well defined because, before the thirteenth century, Jews were not generally pressured to live in specific neighbourhoods or limited to particular areas of settlement (Ravid, 2008: 8–9, 11).

Moreover, before the second millennium CE the majority of Jews worldwide did not live in Europe at all but were concentrated largely in the Islamic world, in addition to some older Jewish settlements in Byzantium. According to the Spanish traveller Benjamin of Tudela (d. 1173), there were sizeable Jewish communities in Thebes, Salonika, and Constantinople, all of which were long-established (Benjamin of Tudela, 1907: 11–14; De Lange, 2018: 81–2, 85). As Robert Chazan notes, however, the notion that the settlement of Jews throughout Europe followed shortly after the Roman destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE is anachronistic. In the diaspora, Jews did not follow Christianity directly westward through the empire but instead expanded more to the east of Palestine and into Mesopotamia, where, between the third and seventh centuries, they consolidated rabbinical tradition and law in the Talmud (Chazan, 2010: 10). Those Jewish settlements that were established in southern Italy and Iberia, which were some of Europe's largest, soon came under the dominion of Muslim civilization. In the territories of Charlemagne (King of the Franks from 768; King of the Lombards from 774, and Holy Roman Emperor from 800 to 814), Jewish merchants were encouraged to do business, and—on the basis of existing Roman precedent—rights of worship and other protections were granted, despite the hostility of some local clergy. A few Jews even served in high stations in his administration, such as Isaac, Charlemagne's emissary to the Abbasid Caliph Harūn al-Rashīd (r. 786–809), who famously brought back from Baghdad the caliph's gift of an elephant named 'Abū al-Abbās' (Benbassa, 1999: 7–9). Jewish communities grew under Charlemagne and his son, Louis the Pious (r. 813–40). Charlemagne was remembered in later Ashkenazi legends as a benevolent sovereign, whose policies toward Jews in his realm are noteworthy, given that he is also known to have forcibly converted the Saxons to Christianity (Fletcher, 1997: 216).

p. 83 Outside of Iberia, southern Italy, and Sicily, pockets of Jewish settlement in western Europe could be found along the northern shores of the Mediterranean, including modest communities in Narbonne, a few other places in the Languedoc, and a very old community in Rome. Further inland, Europe's Jewish population remained sparse in the early Middle Ages. A very early reference to Jewish activity in Central Europe was given in the writing of Iberian Jew Ibrāhīm ibn Ya'qūb al-Isrā'īlī al-Ṭurṭūshī (d. 997), who visited Prague around 965 as part of a trip through Central Europe (including a visit to Emperor Otto I, r. 936–73), perhaps undertaken at the behest of the Córdoba Caliph al-Ḥakam II (r. 961–76). He mentions Jewish traders among numerous merchant groups in the bustling city (Bažant, Bažantová, and Starn, 2010: 14). Yet only after the year 1000 did the Jewish population begin to grow appreciably in Central Europe, when small Jewish communities of merchants began to form in the Rhineland (in towns such as Mainz, Cologne, Worms, and Speyer) (Marcus, 1987: 182), as well as in Bohemia. As Chazan argues, in Europe 'the notion of significant and stable Christian–Jewish interaction over the past two millennia is unsustainable' (Chazan, 2010: 9).

As a result, the preponderate, albeit ambivalent, attention paid to Judaism in Christian thought was not matched by any reciprocal Jewish interest. In fact, examples of Jewish discussions of Christianity before the first millennium—which originate in Babylonia, not Europe—are, on the whole, rare and telegraphic. The Talmud contains only select references to Christianity, offering 'counternarratives' (Schäfer, 2007: 8) to the presentation of Jesus in early Christian sources. A similarly negative portrayal, asserting Jesus was the illegitimate son of a Roman soldier, is found in the scurrilous pseudo-biography of Jesus known as the *Toledot Yeshu* (Life Story/Genealogy of Jesus) (Meerson, Schäfer, and Deutsch, 2014: 28–40). By contrast, the few Jews living in Europe in the early Middle Ages did not, either out of ignorance or prudence, produce abundant writing about Christianity, although they did read some eastern texts. In the early ninth century, notice of the *Toledot Yeshu* reached the attention of a few European Christians like Agobard, Archbishop of Lyons (d. 840), who responded with critical intensity (Cohen, 1999: 131; Meerson, Schäfer, and Deutsch, 2014: 3–4).

The emergence of Islam in the early seventh century and its rapid spread, both westward across North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula and eastward across Central Asia as far as the Indus River, provided a context in



which Judaism and Christianity were distinguished from other religious groups. Jews and Christians (as well as Zoroastrians) were recognized by Muslims as *ahl al-kitāb* ('People of the Book'), a qur'ānic expression denoting—often with ambivalence—those monotheistic communities that shared the prophetic tradition recognized in Islam. This category is differentiated from that of the *mushrikūn*, unbelievers practising idolatry or polytheism. The contrast between these categories is evident in the tenth-century travel account of Ibn Faḍlān, who undertook a diplomatic voyage to the far north at the behest of the caliph of Baghdad, al-Muqtadir (r. 908–32). In 921, Ibn Faḍlān was sent to instruct the newly converted Muslim Bulghars in Islamic practices and beliefs, and possibly to offer protection from the Khazars, a rival tribe partly converted to Judaism. Travelling as far north as Volga Bulgaria (around modern-day Kazan, in south-west Russia), Ibn Faḍlān describes numerous nomadic groups (including 'a clan that worships snakes and another that worships fish and another that worships cranes') and provides an eyewitness account of a ship burial among the Rus' Vikings (Ibn Faḍlān, 2017: 18, 36). His account offers a valuable snapshot of the encounter of Islam, Judaism, shamanism, and Viking religion on the distant fringes of Europe. It was perhaps through such encounters between traders, invaders, and emissaries that legends and polemical ideas about Muslims and Jews reached Scandinavia (mostly Christianized by the twelfth century), leading to curiosities such as references in Old Norse sources to Jewish Host desecration as well as to the life of Muhammad (Hess and Adams, 2015: 8–9, 203, 264).

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In contrast to how such 'pagans' were characterized by Muslims, Christians and Jews in Islamic lands were officially tolerated as *dhimmī*, non-Muslim minorities, whose basic rights to property and religious practice were protected by Islamic law in exchange for loyalty and payment of a minority tax (*jizya*). This doctrine found expression in the so-called Pact of Omar—an apocryphal treaty attributed by legend to the second caliph, 'Umar (r. 634–44), that came to serve as a foundation for juridical precedent in the Middle Ages (Cohen, 1994: 54–5, 112). Islam's policy of disinterested recognition of other religions 'of the book'—upheld insofar as they submitted to Islamic rule and did not challenge Islam's claim to political and spiritual superiority—provided a stable and largely non-threatening context in which some non-Muslim communities, especially Jews, came to flourish. Muslim writers, unlike many Christian authors, did not on the whole look at other religious traditions as necessary antagonists of Islam's own historical drama or as witnesses of its received truth. As Mark Cohen explains, 'relieved of this ambiguity ... Islam was less inclined than Christendom to persecute the Jews and could more readily abide a vital Jewish presence in its midst' (Cohen, 1994: 24).

One striking account from ninth-century al-Andalus (Muslim Iberia) sheds light on the different relationships that Jews, Christians, and Muslims could maintain with each other in the same region. Within the surviving correspondence of ninth-century Christian author Paulus Alvarus of Córdoba, there is a series of letters exchanged with Bodo, a Christian deacon from the Frankish court of Louis the Pious (Gil, 1973: 1:227–70). Around the year 838, Bodo fled to al-Andalus, where he converted to Judaism and took the name Eleazar (Riess, 2019: 52–5). Bodo/Eleazar then engaged in a written disputation with Paulus—himself allegedly the son of a convert from Judaism. In their correspondence, discussing conventional topics in Jewish-Christian polemics, Paulus repeats the standard characterization of the Jews as 'blind' to the meaning of their own Scriptures, and argues that the title of True Israel—God's chosen people—now pertains to him and other Christians. As he says to Bodo/Eleazar, 'all of your law—or better, my law—foretells Christ' because 'we are Israel ... you know that [God's promises] are all mine, not yours' (Gil, 1973: 1:247–9).

Despite their brevity, the letters shed light on the place of Jews—including new converts—in Islamic and Christian societies. It is notable that Bodo/Eleazar relocated to Islamic territory before embracing his new Jewish faith. Such displacement was common for converts to Judaism in Christian Europe, and numerous cases of European converts to Judaism who relocated to the Muslim world are attested in the Cairo Geniza

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↳ ('storeroom'), a hoard of documents gathered for over a millennium in the Ben Ezra synagogue in Old



Cairo (Goitein, 1967–1993: 2:304). In Islamic al-Andalus, Bodo/Eleazar apparently found a safe place to claim his new identity, finding resistance only from the local Christian population for which conversion to Judaism represented a profound theological challenge.

This case sheds light on Christian–Muslim relations as well. Paulus Alvarus was part of the minority community of Mozarabic (Ar. *musta'rab*, 'Arabized') Christians living in Islamic Córdoba. Approximately a decade after Paulus's debate with Bodo/Eleazar, some four-dozen Christians in Córdoba were executed for blasphemy—deliberately insulting Muhammad in public—or apostasy from Islam (Wolf, 1988: 1). Paulus was one of two Mozarabic Christians—the other was his friend Eulogius, a priest in Córdoba executed in 859—to write an apology for the martyrs. Paulus's *Indiculus luminosus* (*Luminous Guide*) defended the movement against critics and urged fellow Christians to refuse acculturation in Islamic civilization and reject Arabic mores: 'Who, I ask, is found among the faithful laymen who is skilful enough to understand the book of Holy Scripture or anything written in Latin by our doctors? Who burns with love of the Gospel, the Prophets, the Apostles?' (Gil, 1973: 1:314–15). The work also attacked the Prophet Muhammad directly, making it one of the earliest works of anti-Muslim polemic in the Christian West. The exchange of Bodo/Eleazar and Paulus underscores both the parameters of the *dhimmī* relationship in Islamic societies as well as the persistence of traditional theological ideas in defining Christian–Jewish relations.

Al-Andalus reached its point of greatest material splendour as a caliphate—combining religious and civil rule—between 929 and 1031. When the caliphate collapsed from civil strife, numerous small Islamic city-states emerged. Despite the resulting political chaos, this created more sources of cultural and intellectual patronage for Jews and Muslims alike, enabling Arabic literature and philosophy to flourish and catalysing the growth of Hebrew writing and thought. The success of Jewish poet Samuel ibn Nagrella (Ha-Nagid, d. c.1056) in the kingdom of Granada—where he rose to be no less than general of the Muslim kingdom's army—further exemplifies the possibilities for cultural symbiosis and political cooperation in al-Andalus. Nevertheless, the security of Jewish life under Islamic rule was premised not on mutual appreciation or indifference to religious divergences but on the vertical relationship of Islamic sovereignty over minority subjugation. When that relationship was challenged, protections were easily revoked, as the 'martyrs' of Córdoba attest. Thus, after Ibn Nagrella's death, his son Joseph, who took over his father's ministerial role, drew the enmity of those in Granada who resented Jewish sovereignty over Muslims. The Granadan Muslim Abū Iṣḥāq al-Ilbīrī attacked Joseph in a vitriolic poem, stating, 'Do not consider the slaying of them [the Jews] to be a breach of faith ... for they have already broken their pact with us' (Monroe, 1974: 208–11). Abū Iṣḥāq's words helped incite a mob to crucify Joseph and kill many Jews in the city. This swift turn of fortune exemplifies the sometimes precarious nature of Muslim protection in the Middle Ages and provides a sobering example of the conflicting realities that defined inter-confessional relations in Iberia (Ashtor, 1973–1984: 1:170).

## Was Spain different?

Iberia's multi-confessional landscape stands out in European history both in terms of its complexity and in its long evolution. This uniqueness comes into focus in comparison with other regions of European lands with significant Muslim populations such as Sicily and Hungary. Sicily was under Muslim control between the early tenth and the end of the eleventh century, and was subsequently ruled by Norman leaders who settled in southern Italy, beginning with Roger I (d. 1101). This rule continued through the reign of Roger's great-grandson, Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen (d. 1250). Despite Frederick's interest in Arabic science and philosophy, he forcibly relocated Sicily's Muslims to the mainland Italian town of Lucera in the 1220s (Metcalf, 2009: 91, 141). Equally fruitful to compare to Iberia are the Muslim settlements in Hungary, which are evident from the early eleventh century (Berend, 2001: 66–7). In the late eleventh century, King Ladislaus I (László, r. 1077–95) and his successor Coloman the Learned (Kálmán, r. 1095–1116, d. 1116) implemented restrictive legislation (forbidding the avoiding of pork, forced relocation, and so on) intended to prohibit Islamic practices and Christianize Muslims in the realm. A Muslim traveller from Granada, Abū Ḥāmid al-Gharnāṭī (d. 1170), visited Hungary in the twelfth century and noted the sizeable Muslim communities. He further noted that Muslim soldiers served King Géza II of Hungary (r. 1141–62) in war against Byzantium, a fact also found in Byzantine sources (Berend, 2001: 141). Nevertheless, he also commented on the existence of crypto-Muslims who were obliged to feign Christian practice in public (Berend, 2001: 240). There is little evidence for Muslim presence in the region after the middle of the thirteenth century, apart from a few passing references to 'Saracens' serving in the royal bureaucracy between 1353 and 1404 (Štulrajterová, 2013: 198). This lack suggests that the aggressive policies of Coloman and his successors—which were directed at Jews and Muslims together—eventually succeeded in Christianizing the population, at least on the level of appearances.

By contrast, the Iberian Peninsula hosted significant Muslim polities between the eighth and fifteenth centuries in which sizeable and sophisticated Jewish populations flourished. Both Muslims and Jews came to play roles in Christian society in later centuries as well. This long history of inter-religious relations has constituted the basis of intense debate among historians. The Spanish scholar Américo Castro proposed in 1948 that the extensive degree of multi-confessional interaction—which he denoted as 'living-togetherness' (*convivencia*)—was definitive in the formation of a unique Spanish culture and history (Nirenberg, 1996: 8). While many have criticized this concept as suggesting an anachronistic notion of religious harmony, others have proposed alternative models that recognize Iberia's unique multi-confessional landscape but see it as defined in part by ritualized competition and violence (Nirenberg, 1996: 9) or guided by political and economic expediency (Catlos, 2014: 520–2). No matter the model, however, historians recognize that Iberian Jews, Christians, and Muslims came into regular contact over the course of nearly a millennium. While similar cultural configurations existed throughout the Middle East, the religious landscape of the Iberian Peninsula was unique in medieval European history.

## Crusade and reconquest

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The Christian conquest of Toledo in Iberia (1085) catalysed the rapid consolidation of most of Iberia's Muslim city-states within the expanding Almoravid dynasty and was followed a decade later with the launching in northern Europe of the First Crusade (1095–9) to capture the Holy Land (1095). The shifting frontiers during these military conflicts with Islam yielded in the Christian popular imagination a spiritual mythology of crusade and 'reconquest'. The Christian mercenary soldier Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar ('El Cid', d. 1099), who in reality fought for both Muslim and Christian armies in turn, was later idealized—most famously in Spain's literary epic poem 'El Cantar del Mio Cid' (The Song of My Cid/Lord)—as a perfect Christian knight fighting for the cause of territorial expansion. Similarly, legends about the military victory of Charles Martel against the Muslims at the Battle of Tours in 732, and about the campaigns against Muslims by Charlemagne (Charles's grandson) in northern Iberia in the late eighth century, lived on in medieval French literature. Islam was regularly depicted in *Chansons de gestes* (epic poems, such as the 'Song of Roland'), prose romance, and liturgical drama in France and England as a form of idolatry, and Muslims were cast as pagans who worshipped the Prophet Muhammad (Tolan, 2002: 126–7).

A different historical myth developed among Jewish thinkers of the period. In contrast to the Christians in Muslim territories, many Jews continued to flourish under the Almoravids (Fierro, 1997: 523–4), and those that did relocate still often memorialized life under Islamic rule. The poet Moses Ibn Ezra (d. after 1138), born in Granada but displaced by the Almoravids to Toledo, lamented his fate of ending his days among the Christians. 'How long will my feet be sent wandering in exile (*galut*)? ... my paths would be blessed if God were to bring me back to Granada ... a land in which my life was pleasant' (Brann, 1991: 44–5). His longing went unfulfilled, as the Almoravids were soon conquered by the rival Berber faction of the Almohads, causing more Jews to flee north to the Christian kingdoms. Numerous others, including the great rabbinical scholar Maimonides (d. 1204), sought refuge elsewhere in the Muslim world, including North Africa and Fatimid Egypt. As one historian summarizes the shift, 'During its first four centuries, al-Andalus had been a land of three religions; after this century, the only remaining indigenous non-Muslims would be a minority of Jews' (Viguera-Molins, 2010: 33).

## The twelfth-century turn

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A notable demographic expansion in the twelfth century supported the rapid growth of Europe's urban population. In most regions of Latin Europe, populations increased significantly between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, peaking in most areas around the dawn of the fourteenth (Fossier, 2004: 14). This led to more direct interaction between Christians and Jews, while the First Crusade established European settlements in the Holy Land, putting Latin thinkers in more direct contact with Byzantine and Islamic civilizations (Kedar, 1984: 86–9). The conquest of Toledo produced a similar effect in Iberia, leading to the translation from Arabic into Latin—an activity that involved Jews directly—of numerous texts of Greek science and philosophy that had been lost in the Latin world.

One figure who provided a bridge between these different worlds was Petrus Alfonsi, a Jew from northern Iberia, educated in Arabic letters, who converted to Christianity in 1106 and spent his career in France and in England. He translated Islamic aphorisms and didactic fables into Latin under the title *Disciplina Clericalis* (Instruction of Students/Clerics), and then wrote the *Dialogus contra Iudaeos* (Dialogue against the Jews), an extended polemic against Judaism that also included a chapter against Islam. Both works were immensely popular and introduced knowledge of Islamic and Jewish texts into Latin Europe for the first time (Tolan, 1993: 108–10). This knowledge expanded when translators of Greek science and Arabic philosophy working in Iberia—the Englishman Robert of Ketton and the Istrian Herman of Carinthia, among others—also

translated the entire Qur'an and related material about Islam into Latin (Burman, 2007:15, 106). They worked at the behest of French Abbot Peter the Venerable of Cluny (d. 1156), who used this material, together with Alfonsi's polemic, to produce elaborate treatises attacking both Judaism and Islam (Iogna-Prat, 2002: 302, 339). These marked a new stage in Christian polemical writing by including references not only to biblical passages but also to non-Christian authorities such as the Talmud and the Qur'an (Cohen, 1999: 259–60).

Even before knowledge of non-Christian texts became more widespread among Christian thinkers, the rapid growth of the first universities in the twelfth century supported the emergence of new scholarly communities that began to engage more extensively with the Hebrew Bible and to seek philosophical methods for establishing truth apart from Scripture through logic and dialectic. In the late eleventh century, Gilbert of Crispin, Abbot of Westminster, wrote a pair of polemical dialogues that show a movement towards the discussion of Christian arguments on seemingly rational terms. His *Disputatio Iudei et Christiani* (Dispute of the Jew and the Christian, c.1092) sets out scriptural authorities for Christian truth, and the *Disputatio Christiani cum Gentili* (Dispute of the Christian with the Gentile, c.1093) attempts to establish Christian truth on the basis of rational argument (*ratio*) (Abulafia, 1995: 73). This methodology provided a foundation for numerous works of debate and disputation in the twelfth century (Funkenstein, 1971: 377).

p. 89 Only a few years later, a canon at the cathedral school of Notre-Dame in Paris, William of Champeaux, set up a retreat outside the city walls that would eventually become the abbey of St Victor. The canons who worked there dedicated themselves to biblical exegesis, including a new attention to the Hebrew Bible itself. William's student Peter Abelard (1079–1142) followed the rationalist model for Christian thought begun by Gilbert. His *Collationes* (Conversations), better known as the *Dialogus inter philosophum, iudaeum, et christianum* (Dialogue of a Philosopher with a Jew and a Christian, 1136) sought to evaluate core tenets of Christian belief in a comparative context on the basis of reason and logic (Abelard, 2001: lv). Other Victorine scholars, such as Hugh of St Victor (d. 1141) and his student Andrew (d. 1175) engaged with Judaism through reforms in exegetical practice, the latter pursuing a rudimentary study of Hebrew itself through consultation with local Jewish scholars (Smalley, 1983: 155). The greater Christian engagement with Hebrew sources and Jewish scholars also led to polemical encounters, such as the debate between German Benedictine Rupert of Deutz and the Jew Judah—the latter eventually converted to Christianity and, under the name of Herman, engaged his former coreligionists in debate (Abulafia, 1995: 118). His dramatization of events in his conversion narrative states that Rupert defended Christian belief 'both by reason and by authority of Scripture' (Morrison, 1992: 81). Herman-Judah's text exemplifies the broader twelfth-century expansion of traditional proofs of Christian truth to include not only philosophical reason but also the personal testimony of converts.

Jews became the object of Christian anxieties on the level of popular piety as well as in the realm of learned theology. The most palpable reflection of the former is the sudden appearance of the Blood Libel, in which Jews were accused of abducting and murdering Christians. The first ritual murder accusation appeared in England in 1150 when Thomas of Monmouth wrote of the death—allegedly at the hands of Jews—of young William of Norwich six years before. Such accusations recurred across England and the continent for centuries thereafter, persisting even into the present day (Rose, 2015: 9). By the late thirteenth century, theological discussions of the doctrine of Transubstantiation gave way to new accusations that Jews stole Hosts from sanctuaries in order to desecrate them. After the first accusation in Paris in 1290 dozens of subsequent charges appeared all across Europe both in stories and in church iconography (Rubin, 1999: 109–14).

The increased Christian attention to Judaism provoked a robust tradition of Jewish anti-Christian writing in response. For the first time, Jewish thinkers engaged extensively with Christian theology in philosophical terms and provided critiques of Christian claims and beliefs. The Iberian poet and philosopher Judah Halevi (d. 1141) composed, just a few years after Peter Abelard's *Conversations*, a fictional dialogue between a Jew, a

Christian, a Muslim and a pagan king, entitled the *Kuzari*. Based on the legend of the conversion of the Asian Khazars to Judaism (the same converts referred to by Ibn Faḍlān as rivals of the Bulgars), Halevi's text imagines a pagan Khazar king comparing the relative merits of each religion and eventually choosing to convert to Judaism. The work draws from Aristotelian philosophy to provide a critique ↵ of Islam and Christianity and an apology for Judaism as the most rational religion (Sirat, 1985: 115). At the same time, Jacob ben Reuben (fl. second half of the twelfth century), who was among those Jews who relocated upon the rise of the Almohads, wrote an extensive polemic in Hebrew against Christianity entitled *Sefer milḥamot Adonai* (Book of the Wars of the Lord). The work, which takes the form of a dialogue between a Christian and Jew, includes a significant portion of the Gospel of Matthew translated into Hebrew and strongly critiques Christian beliefs in the Incarnation. Jacob's polemic inspired numerous subsequent works such as, perhaps indirectly, the *Sefer Nizzāḥon Vetus* (Old Book of Victory) from thirteenth-century Ashkenaz, which showed familiarity with all the Gospels (Berger, 1979: 30), and the work of fourteenth-century writer Shem Tov ibn Shaprut, which provided the first full Hebrew translation of Matthew (Lasker, 2007: 15). Around 1400 in Prague, in the wake of a massacre of seventy-seven Jews prompted by accusations of a convert named Peter, talmudist Yom-Tov Lipman Mühlhausen (fl. early fifteenth century) wrote the *Sefer Nizzāḥon* (Book of Victory; not to be confused with the earlier work with this title). He combines anti-Christian and anti-Qaraite arguments with an interest in rationalist Jewish philosophy adopted from Maimonides and others, showing that he was aware of the intellectual currents of Jews in Spain and France (Žonca, 2018: 136–8).

The large-scale shift in patterns of Jewish settlement had a notable influence in Jewish religious life as well. The small Jewish communities in France and Germany began to grow in the eleventh century, despite incidents of persecution and uneven royal policies. Solomon ben Isaac of Troyes ('Rashi', d. 1105) was an active biblical commentator in France who studied under some of the leading rabbis of Worms and Mainz and eventually founded his own yeshiva in Troyes. His exegetical commentaries on the Hebrew Bible often stressed the *peshat* (literal or historical meaning), and his readings—in some cases responses to Christian interpretation—were widely influential on the study of the Torah. A number of Rashi's grandsons, notably Samuel ben Meir (d. c.1158), were also preeminent rabbinical authorities and their influential 'Tosafot' (additions), which included comments on Jewish relations with Christians, came to be included in all printed copies of the Talmud (Kanarfogel, 2015: 158). Rashi's works were also read by many medieval Christian thinkers ranging from the twelfth-century Victorines to the fourteenth-century Franciscan exegete Nicholas of Lyra (d. 1349), who quotes him extensively in his own voluminous commentaries. Because Lyra's *Postillae* (Postils or Additions), together with the later additions by fifteenth-century convert and bishop Solomon Halevi/Paul of Burgos (d. 1434), were often printed with the biblical text, Rashi's readings continued to be read by Christians well into the seventeenth century (Klepper, 2008: 59, 109–10).

At the same time, Jews in the Rhineland developed a flourishing religious life. In the late twelfth century, a new pietist movement emerged among German Jews (Ashkenazi Hasidim) settled along the Rhine between Speyer and Mainz, stressing dutiful adherence to Jewish legal customs as well as mystical reflection, intense prayer, and asceticism. Its ideals were most fully expressed by Judah ben Samuel ('the Pious', d. 1217), author of *Sefer Ḥasidim* (Book of the Pious), the most important work of Jewish devotional ↵ literature from the period. It stresses the importance of fulfilling God's will through observance and reflective devotion and enjoins the pious to minimize contact with non-pious Jews as well as gentiles (Marcus, 1981: 88, 93).

## A persecuting society

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The years between 1215 and 1315 constituted a formative period for new policies and norms governing Christian interaction with other religious communities. This structuring is evident in the compendium of canon law, the *Decretals*, made in 1230 by Friar Raymond of Peñafort (d. 1275), which contains a specific section of laws pertaining to Jews and Saracens (Muldoon, 1979: 4; Freidenreich, 2011: 45–6). A decade and a half before this, Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) convened the Fourth Lateran Council (Lateran IV) in 1215. Considered now one of the most significant ecclesiastical councils of the medieval Church, it responded to the spread of the heresy in southern France, and addressed theological questions relating to Transubstantiation as well as pressing issues of ecclesiastical practice and discipline. It also mandated that all Jews and Muslims be required to wear distinctive dress in order to prevent inadvertent sexual relations among the members of different religious communities, a decree that eventually led in some places to the practice of assigning a ‘badge’ (*signum*) to mark off minorities (Resnick, 2012: 80).

Lateran IV’s attempt to systematize the categories of social differences prompted R. I. Moore to posit the council as a key moment in the ‘formation of a persecuting society’ in the later Middle Ages. In his words, ‘Lateran IV laid down a machinery of persecution of Western Christendom ... which was to prove adaptable to a much wider variety of victims than the heretics for whom it was designed’ (Moore, 2007: 10). Lateran IV also limited the formation of new religious orders, leading to the growth of existing Mendicant orders including the Franciscans and Dominicans. Both groups dedicated themselves to preaching and study, producing missionaries and scholars that propagated a new, more systematic vision of Christian orthodoxy. Lateran IV also mandated the organization of ‘inquests’ (*inquisitiones*) into heretical belief and behaviour, and subsequent preaching campaigns against the Albigensian Cathars in the Languedoc led, by the 1230s, to the papal appointment of mendicants as leaders in this new inquisitorial activity (Cohen, 1982: 45).

The mendicant interest in preaching to non-Christians also led to more intense critical reading of non-Christian sources (Chazan, 1989: 30). As part of such efforts, Friar Raymond of Peñafort helped organize a debate in Barcelona in 1263 between Friar Paul Christiani (a convert) and the leader of the Catalan Jewish community, Nahmanides (d. 1270). It centred on the Christian claim that post-biblical literature in the rabbinical tradition, above all the Talmud, proved that the Messiah had already come. Unlike earlier assaults on rabbinical tradition such as those made by Nicholas Donin in Paris in the 1240s, which led to the widespread burning of the Talmud in the city (Dahan, 1999: 42), the arguments made in Barcelona claimed that the Talmud was a proof of Christian truth.

The immediate effects of the Disputation of Barcelona were visible both in papal rhetoric as well as in subsequent polemical writing by friars. In 1267, Pope Clement IV (1265–8) issued a bull (*‘Turbato corde’*) urging friars to serve as inquisitors to investigate not only heretical Christians but also Jews who might have encouraged conversion to Judaism or helped converts return to the Jewish fold (Grayzel, 1989: 103). Clement’s words give voice to an expanded vision of the scope of Christian jurisdiction to encompass not only heresy but also infidelity, and thus represented an erosion of the rights transmitted in the *Sicut Iudaeis non* bull (Grayzel, 1989: 13–15). This rationale for the regulation of non-Christian belief was developed even more by Friar Ramon Martí (d. after 1287), who participated actively in Dominican efforts to learn Arabic and Hebrew (Vose, 2009: 105, 113). In addition to anti-Muslim polemics, Martí wrote two anti-Jewish works attacking rabbinical literature, including the *Pugio fidei* (Dagger of Faith), which provided extensive citations of texts in their original languages and alphabets (Szpiech, 2013a: 129–34). Martí elaborated the scholastic arguments of his Dominican confrère, Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274), on whose *Summa contra gentiles* (Summa against the Gentiles) he relied heavily, and combined them with the linguistic, extra-biblical focus introduced at the Disputation of Barcelona.

The Christian attention to post-biblical Jewish thought in the late thirteenth century was matched by a parallel interest in Islamic sources. Florentine Dominican Riccoldo da Montecroce (d. 1320), who spent most of the 1290s in Baghdad, attacked Islam in his *Contra legem Sarracenorum* (Against the Law of the Saracens), maligning Muhammad as a pseudo-prophet, liar, and sexual deviant. His work would go on to become a popular Latin Christian polemic against Islam in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and, following its translation into German by Martin Luther, continued to be influential for centuries more (Tolan, 2002: 254; George-Tvrtković, 2012: 89–90). Almost exactly contemporaneous with Riccoldo was the career of the polymath Ramon Llull, born on the island of Mallorca around 1232. Llull dedicated his life to dialogue and disputation with Muslims, developing an elaborate system of philosophical logic by which he intended to prove the rational superiority of the Christian faith to Muslim interlocutors and readers. His best-known work is the *Llibre del gentil i dels tres savis* (Book of the Gentile and the Three Wise Men), a literary dialogue between a Muslim, a Christian, and a Jew, resembling dialogues of Abelard and Halevi (Daniel, 1993: 65; Tolan 2002: 263–7). Llull encouraged fellow Christians to study Arabic, and at the ecumenical Council of Vienne (1311–12), he won support for a proposal to establish chairs for teaching Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, and Aramaic at various European universities (Cohen, 1982: 201); these plans, however, did not seem to have many tangible results (Vose, 2009: 32, 110).

p. 93 The military successes of the Christians in Castile and Aragon led to the rapid expansion of Christian territory in the thirteenth century, culminating in the conquest of Almohad Seville in 1248. This catalysed the formation of the small Nasrid kingdom around Granada, which would survive—as a tributary state under Castile and the only remaining Muslim polity in Europe—until 1492. The vast areas of Castile that were conquered had to be parcelled out and repopulated, a process that involved many Jews who were invited to settle and in some cases granted land holdings by the crown (Ray, 2006: 17–21). Like the Jews, the Muslim population that remained in Christian territories, who in modern scholarship have been referred to as ‘Mudejar’ Muslims, were regarded as part of ‘the royal treasure’ under the king’s protection. As such, they enjoyed basic legal protections including a circumscribed freedom of religion. Rules governing Jewish and Mudejar life and religious practice in Christian territories are given in the vernacular law code *Siete partidas* (Seven Parts) of King Alfonso X (r. 1252–84), which mandated minorities ‘keeping their own law and not insulting ours’ (Powell, 1990: 42). The laws stipulated by Alfonso support the protection of converts from Islam and, following Lateran IV, stress the importance of avoiding sexual relations between Christians and non-Christians (Catlos, 2014: 363).

Sexuality was a perpetual challenge in part because it was not uncommon for Christians, Muslims, and Jews to have children with their domestic slaves, who were usually (although not always) of a different religion. The circulation of captives sold for domestic service was a persistent feature of life around the Mediterranean (Hershenzon, 2018: 19, 45). The first Christian orders dedicated to the redemption of captives in Muslim lands, the Mercedarians and the Trinitarians, were founded in the thirteenth century and various polemical works in Arabic and Aljamiado (Romance written in Arabic letters), including some allegedly written by Muslim captives in France and elsewhere, survive from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Colominas Aparicio, 2018: 21). It was in this context that writers like Alfonso Buenhombre, discussed in the introduction to this chapter, could add authority to their own anti-Jewish texts by claiming they were long-lost Arabic books discovered while in captivity in a Muslim land.



## Conquests, conversions, and expulsions

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Numerous events over the course of the fifteenth century affected the relations between Jews, Christians, and Muslims all around the Mediterranean. The expansion of the Ottoman Empire, which would become the main political and military rival to Habsburg Spain in subsequent centuries, marked the growth of Muslim communities in the Balkans in the middle of the century and Muslim conquest of Constantinople in 1453. In Iberia, Jewish–Christian relations were permanently altered by the anti–Jewish riots that swept across the peninsula in 1391, leading to the murder of tens of thousands of Jews and the forcible conversion of tens of thousands more (Baer, 1961: 2:96). From the aftermath of these riots, a new class of converted Jews (*conversos*) emerged, precipitating a deep social and religious crisis in Iberian society that lasted throughout the fifteenth century and beyond. Many *conversos*, forced to adopt Christianity in public, maintained some Jewish traditions and beliefs in their private life. As *conversos* were, unlike Jews, entitled to the same economic and social opportunities as other Christians, a culture of suspicion began to emerge in which *converso* religiosity was scrutinized.

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The problem of how to recognize religious affiliation and how to understand the role of volition in the efficacy of baptism became acute over the course of the century, giving rise to a new vocabulary of genealogy to discuss ‘Jewish blood’ and to distinguish between ‘New Christians’ and ‘Old’ (Nirenberg, 2013: 239). The uncertainty over such questions and the proliferation of new religious practices were decisive factors in the formation of the Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition by the Spanish monarchs in 1478. Although much of its work was undertaken by Dominican friars, the Spanish Inquisition operated under control of the monarchs, and would persist as a bureaucratic institution of the state until 1834 (Peters, 1989: 104). While the initial focus of the Inquisition was the religious habits of *conversos*, its scope widened in the sixteenth century to include forcibly converted Muslims (*Moriscos*), Protestants, and other ‘heterodox’ groups (Peters, 1989: 101).

The expulsion of the Jews from the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon in 1492, which took place only a few months after the Christian conquest of Muslim Granada, led to the displacement of perhaps 75,000 people, although accurate figures are lacking (Assis and Meyerson, 2018: 181). These events drove many Jews and Muslims towards North Africa and the Ottoman Empire, which had expanded in the Balkans in the middle of the fifteenth century and conquered Constantinople in 1453. Although the Jews had suffered many expulsions throughout Europe—including from England (1290), France (1182, 1306, 1394), Hungary (1349 and 1360), Austria (1420–1), select towns in Germany (1012, 1442, 1478, 1499, and so on), and elsewhere—the expulsion from Castile and Aragon, Portugal (1497), and Navarra (1498), affected the largest number of people and produced economic, religious, and cultural effects that lasted for centuries. The expulsion of 1492, together with the expulsion of the *Moriscos* from Spain in the early seventeenth century, marked the last moments of centuries of large-scale interaction between Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula, opening a new chapter in inter-confessional relations in early modern Europe.



## Conclusion

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The history of interaction between Jews, Christians, and Muslims in medieval Europe is not uniform, but instead unfolds in different ways in different regions. Christian–Muslim and Jewish–Muslim interaction was confined to those few places where Muslims lived—Iberia and southern Italy—while Jewish–Christian interaction occurred in a number of communities both in the north and south. Such activity was naturally concentrated where the Jewish population was largest—the upper and middle Rhine Valley, Bohemia, southern France, and the Iberian Peninsula—but also occurred in areas that Jews visited for business. Although most engagement with rival religious traditions took place in writing and iconography rather than through face-to-face encounters, the nature of the ↩ religious imagination cannot be separated from the history of the social interaction of real people. Christian ideas about other religions were not primarily formed in response to the presence of real Jews and Muslims in Christian society, but instead grew out of theological categories and concepts. But, once established, these ideas helped determine the parameters of Christian interaction with those groups by affecting legal norms and social practices. In a similar way, Muslim ideas about the role of Judaism and Christianity in prophetic history affected the policies that guided legal and social dealings between Muslims and non-Muslims. Finally, although Jews mostly viewed Islam and Christianity through the lens of their own religious history and their own experience of religious autonomy, they still adopted and influenced many customs of the majority cultures in which they lived, modifying their religious understanding through the process. Taken in the broadest terms, the history of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in medieval Europe involved both the lived encounter between neighbouring communities and, more often, the imagined competition between their rival faiths.

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CHAPTER

## 6 Reformation and Counter-Reformation in Europe

Jonathan Willis

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### Abstract

This chapter provides an overview of the Protestant and Catholic Reformations in Europe. It begins by establishing the significance of the Reformation and commenting on recent trends in historical scholarship. An outline of theological change during the period follows, before consideration of the political dimension of religious reform across Europe, including the position of religious ‘radicals’, and the development of theories of resistance against persecuting secular rulers. The chapter moves on to consider the impact of the Reformations on religious belief, practice, and identity, looking at the spread of reform through visual and musical means, as well as topics such as education and disenchantment. It ends with the social impacts of Reformation on religious violence, toleration, and gender, and concludes by suggesting that the transformations instigated by the Catholic and Protestant Reformations wrought changes of great magnitude and complexity upon the Churches, nations, and peoples of early modern Europe.

**Keywords:** Catholic Reformation, Protestant Reformation, justification, Luther, Calvin, belief, practice, identity, toleration, disenchantment

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IT would be easy to claim that no event, religious or otherwise, played a more powerful or decisive role in the making of Europe as we know it than the Reformation. The religious upheavals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries shattered the fractious consensus of medieval Latin Christendom, and set in motion processes of religious conflict and disintegration which are still playing out today. There is increasing scholarly agreement, however, that the Reformation should not be viewed as an ‘event’, but rather as a process, or a series of parallel processes, which had their origins in part within the late medieval Church (e.g. Marshall, 2017a). Reformation and Counter-Reformation are now more often seen as complementary rather than straightforwardly conflicting impulses, which were closely intertwined with a range of other significant early modern developments, such as state formation and the (eventual) growth of religious toleration. The story of the Reformation(s) is therefore not simply an account of theological, ecclesiastical, or religious change, but also one of profound political, social, and cultural transformation. Religion suffused



every aspect of life in the medieval and early modern periods, and the seismic shocks brought about by the Reformation had similarly far-reaching consequences.

Traditionally the Reformation has been seen as an important stepping stone in the broad sweep of human history, and the march of ‘progress’ from primitive barbarism to civilized modernity. The German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920), for example, saw in the Protestant Reformation the seeds of the ‘disenchantment of the world’, by which he meant the replacement of superstitious and magical beliefs by more rational and ultimately secular modes of thought, resulting eventually—and paradoxically—in the ‘iron cage’ of modern capitalism (Weber, 2005). Recent scholarship on the Reformation in particular, and early modernity more generally, has rejected such linear and teleological models of development in favour of a more complex, nuanced, and frankly ↴ messier account of the uneven nature of change in these areas, rooted in the specificity of historical contexts, cultures, and circumstances. For example, the historian Robert Scribner has argued persuasively that Protestant Europe saw, if anything, *increased* levels of ‘enchantment’ in the wake of the Reformation, in the form of widespread millenarian beliefs, and increased emphasis on the activity of God and the Devil in the world, as seen through the operation of the doctrine of Providence (Scribner, 1993). Research has also found examples of pragmatic (as opposed to principled) religious toleration amidst the religious violence of the Reformation era, which was often the result of practical decisions taken by local communities, rather than the philosophical insights of prominent intellectuals (Kaplan, 2007). In short, the Reformation was a powerful agent of change, but the pace, nature, direction, and extent of that change was often both surprising and unpredictable.

## Theological change

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When approaching the Reformation for the first time, theology is the logical place to begin. In the early and middle decades of the twentieth century, historians tended to emphasize the weakness, corruption, and unpopularity of the Catholic Church on the eve of the Reformation (e.g. Dickens, 1964). From the 1970s onwards, however, revisionist historians looked afresh at the late medieval Church, arguing persuasively that, while not without its problems, it was on the whole a vibrant, popular, and adaptive institution, and that its collapse in certain regions in the wake of the Reformation was very far from inevitable (e.g. Duffy, 1992). The precise situation varied somewhat according to geography: the Church in England was on the whole efficiently and competently run, whereas parts of the Church in Germany were more poorly resourced, and situations such as clerical concubinage were far from the exception, even if they were not quite the norm (Gordon, 2015: 18). Still, it is now widely accepted that even Germany was suffering from an excess of lay piety on the eve of the Reformation, rather than a dearth of it, and that the vast majority of lay people were engaged and enthused by what the Church had to offer them (Moeller, 1972).

The defining doctrine of late medieval Christianity was undoubtedly purgatory, the existence of which had been codified by church authorities during the twelfth century (Le Goff, 1984). Purgatory was a ‘third place’, between heaven and hell, where the unclean souls of everyday sinners were purified before they could be admitted to the celestial ranks of the Church Triumphant. Most of the popular pious activity of the later Middle Ages was directed towards the goal of reducing the time individuals could expect to spend suffering the pains of the purifying fires of purgatory: either by aiding the souls of the already deceased, or by offsetting the sins being accrued by the living. In addition, the theology of the dominant Nominalist school buttressed the notion, central within late medieval Christianity, that individuals had the capacity—in fact, a duty—to make a personal contribution to their own salvation. This was summed up by the axiom ↴ *facienti quod in se est Deus denegat gratiam*—‘God will not deny grace to the man who does his best’ (McGrath, 1998: 83). It was this notion, of human agency in the process of salvation, which underpinned practices such as votive masses, pilgrimage, the founding of chantries, membership of confraternities, investment in parish churches, and, of course, indulgences.

It was against this notion of human instrumentality in the process of salvation that Martin Luther (1483–1546) began his rebellion in 1517, with the putative nailing of 95 Theses against the practice of indulgences to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg (historians are still unable to agree as to whether or not this happened, cf. Marshall, 2017b vs. Pettegree, 2015). Thus, Luther’s primary Reformation insight was and remained a theological one, born out of an overwhelming Augustinian sense of his own utter sinfulness and depravity. How could God expect a being as corrupt as he knew himself to be to contribute positively to his own salvation? The prospect offered nothing better than the certainty of eternal damnation. Either following a moment of ecstatic revelation (his *türmerlebnis* or ‘tower experience’), or slowly after years of reading and lecturing on the Bible (Roper, 2017: 99–101), Luther came to the insight that God’s justifying grace was given freely, and not earned or merited by any human action. This was the doctrine of *sola fide*, justification by faith alone, and from the moment of that single theological revelation the writing was on the wall for indulgences, votive masses, pilgrimage, relics, and the entirety of the medieval economy of salvation.

Luther’s insights owed much to his reading of scripture, and to the pioneering work of Christian Humanists like Erasmus of Rotterdam (c. 1469–1536), whose new parallel Greek/Latin edition of the New Testament, published in 1516 as the *Novum Instrumentum*, challenged some of the traditional orthodoxies contained within the official Bible of the Catholic Church, the Latin Vulgate. Luther also came to challenge clerical privilege through his notion of a ‘Priesthood of all Believers’, ultimately refuting the authority of the institution of the Papacy itself, which he branded as Antichristian. And in his 1520 treatise *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, he launched a savage assault on the Catholic sacramental system, reducing the number of sacraments from seven to two, and rejecting the doctrine of Transubstantiation, which had invested Catholic priests with the power to convert the Eucharistic elements of bread and wine into the real physical flesh and blood of Christ.

Almost from its inception, however, the Protestant Reformation was a disunited movement. The Zürich reformer Huldrych Zwingli (1484–1531) claimed to have begun preaching the Gospel in 1516, a year before the Luther affair erupted onto the European stage, and in 1522 he presided over a meal of sausages during Lent, in defiance of the Church and in defence of Christian liberty (Marshall, 2009: 26). The communitarian social and political environment of the Swiss Cantons gave Zwingli’s Protestantism a greater emphasis on the relationship between the spiritual and social lives of believers, and a more pronounced concern for Christian community and society as a whole, than was visible in Luther’s intensely personal theology (Opitz, 2016: 130). While Zwingli’s advocacy of Christian liberty, the centrality of scripture, and justification by faith alone, were more or less aligned with Lutheran principles, the two reformers fell out ↴ spectacularly at the Colloquy of Marburg over the question of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharistic elements. While Luther rejected Transubstantiation, he nevertheless held to the notion of a real physical presence in the bread and wine via a form of miraculous sacramental union. For Zwingli, the Eucharist functioned more as a memorial of the biblical account of the Last Supper, and while its spiritual benefits were real, Christ was not physically present. Luther’s response was to chalk Christ’s words at the Last Supper, *hoc est enim corpus meum* (‘this is my body’) on the negotiating table, and that was that.

The largely urban Reformations presided over by figures such as Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger (1504–75) in Zürich, Martin Bucer (1491–1551) in Strassburg, Johannes Oecolampadius (1482–1531) in Basel, and eventually John Calvin (1509–64) in Geneva, are generally taken as together forming a separate branch of the Reformation tradition from Lutheranism, under the label ‘Reformed’ Protestantism. This spiritual and theological kinship was formally recognized through the adoption of the First Helvetic Confession by most Swiss Reformed churches in the 1530s, and of the Second Helvetic Confession by the Swiss, Scottish, Hungarian, French, and Polish Reformed churches in the 1560s and 1570s. By the second half of the sixteenth century, Calvin was by far the most influential figure in the international Reformed Protestant community: for example, the theology of the English Thirty-Nine Articles was effectively Calvinist

(Marshall, 2017a: 457–8). Calvin's Eucharistic position was part way between Luther's and Zwingli's, in that he allowed for a real but spiritual (rather than physical) presence of Christ in the Eucharistic elements.

The defining doctrine of Calvinism under later Calvinists, such as Calvin's Genevan successor Theodore Beza (1519–1605) and English Puritan divines including William Perkins (1558–1602), has come to be seen as Predestination. Predestination was logically inherent in Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone: if human instrumentality was stripped out of the soteriological process, and salvation was the free unmerited gift of God, then Predestination of the elect to salvation by God Himself was the inevitable result. But while Luther emphasized God's choice of his elect, Calvin, in his more systematic and lawyerly fashion, spelled out the inevitable corollary: that God was the author of two eternal decrees, one of election, and another of reprobation. In other words, from before their birth (in fact, from before the Fall, according to the more radical 'supralapsarian' school of thought), every human soul had been predestined by God to end up in either heaven or hell. Calvin himself warned individual Christians to accept God's decrees, and not to seek to question or understand them, lest they end up lost in an inextricable labyrinth (Dixon, 2014: 56; Willis, 2017: 222). This sound advice, however, went unheeded by successive generations of Calvinists, including English and Scottish puritans, whose 'experimental Calvinism' may well have put some individuals at increased risk of spiritual anxiety and soteriological despair, although others found the doctrine liberating (Kendall, 1979; Stachniewski, 1991).

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In theological terms, the Catholic response to the Reformation was to stand firm on all of the most hotly contended issues of doctrine, such as its Eucharistic theology, soteriology, clerical celibacy, the practice of indulgences, and so on, while attempting to raise standards and reform abuses, in terms of clerical education and performance, and ecclesiastical administration and governance. But focus on the Catholic response to the Protestant Reformation (often labelled as a 'Counter-Reformation') can distract attention from pre-existing currents of Catholic reform which predated Luther's protest against indulgences in 1517. As John C. Olin has reminded us, Catholic reform 'did not begin in opposition to Protestantism but was a parallel movement ... springing out of the same context and responding to very similar needs for religious change and revival': namely, 'to correct ills in the Church and reinvigorate its life and mission' (Olin, 1990: ix). John O'Malley has suggested that the more neutral term 'Early Modern Catholicism' is perhaps the most helpful way to escape the baggage inherent in the existing nomenclature of a 'Counter' or 'Catholic' Reformation (O'Malley, 2000). That said, the Council of Trent, which met for twenty-five sessions in three blocks between 1545 and 1563 (1545–47, 1551–2, 1562–3), was the most obvious and direct Catholic response to the Reformation. The decrees of the Council reinforced papal power and authority, reaffirmed traditional Catholic doctrine and practice, sought to curb abuses, and brought in reforming measures such as the institution of seminaries for the training of priests. At the same time there has been significant scholarly energy expended on 'de-centring' the Catholic Reformation, by stressing the breadth and depth of global missionary efforts by existing religious orders such as the Franciscans, as well those conducted by the new Jesuit order, everywhere from China and India to North and South America (Hsia, 1998). Indeed, Simon Ditchfield has provocatively claimed that 'it was only thanks to the expanded missionary imagination, and set of practical skills, developed in response to the challenge of evangelizing the New World that the Old World came to be (re-)Christianized in the way that it was' (Ditchfield, 2015).

## Politics

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However much the reformers' insights were primarily doctrinal in nature, from their inception the Reformation movements had to grapple with the issue of how to relate to secular authority. Initially at least, Protestant reformers tended to emphasize the importance and dignity of secular magistrates as having been instituted and ordained by God, in part as a way of undermining papal pretensions to a greater dignity and pre-eminence than mere worldly potentates. Martin Luther entitled the first of his three great reforming treatises of 1520 *An Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, while William Tyndale's (1494–1536) *The Obedience of a Christian Man* (1528) supposedly caused Henry VIII (1491–1547; r. 1509–47) to remark that 'this is a book for me and all kings to read!' because of its espousal of royal rather than papal supremacy over the Church (Marshall, 2017a: 177). Historians sometimes describe the Lutheran and Reformed movements as comprising a 'Magisterial' Reformation—that is to say the Reformation's 'official' branch, presided over by ruling magistrates—as distinct from the activities of 'Radical' groups, which sought to operate outside of established political control. In practice, the relationship between even magisterial Reformation and secular authority could be choppy, depending upon how sympathetic secular rulers proved to be to the new religious ideas.

Luther himself found both friends and enemies amid the complex political structures of the Holy Roman Empire. Ruled over by an emperor who was in theory chosen by seven imperial Electors (three archbishops and four secular rulers), the Holy Roman Empire was a de facto Habsburg monarchy from 1438 until 1740, and under the successor branch of Habsburg–Lorraine until 1918. The emperor was expected, with the Electors' permission, to summon regular Diets or meetings of the German Estates, such as that which met at Worms in 1521, to consider how to respond to the Luther affair. In addition to the emperor and Electors, Diets might be attended by representatives of up to twenty-five major secular principalities, ninety archbishoprics, bishoprics, and abbeys, a hundred counts, and about sixty-five imperial cities (Greengrass, 2014: 312). These complex overlapping structures and independent jurisdictions helped both Luther and his Reformation to survive and flourish, for the small university town of Wittenberg was under the direct control and protection of one of the four secular Electors of the empire, Frederick the Wise (1463–1525), the Elector of Saxony. Despite remaining a Catholic and possessing an enormous collection of holy relics, Frederick defended his superstar theology professor from the animus of the hostile Catholic Emperor Charles V (1500–58; r. 1519–56). The uneven pace of the Reformation in Germany was in large part a function of which elements in the patchwork of myriad principalities and cities were sympathetic to and decided to adopt reforming ideas, and which opted to remain loyal to the Catholic Church. In 1531, the Lutheran princes of the empire formed a defensive military union, the League of Schmalkalden, to stave off the interference of Charles V. The League was eventually defeated at and dissolved following the 1547 Battle of Mühlberg. Following the partial toleration of the 1548 Augsburg Interim, in 1555 the Peace of Augsburg established the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio*, effectively 'whose realm, his religion', allowing states to choose to practice either the Lutheran or the Catholic faith.

This principle was tested to extremes in England, where a small but vigorous group of evangelical reformers took advantage of Henry VIII's marital difficulties to create an unstable alliance with the capricious king. It was these reformers who provided the necessary intellectual, theological, and political muscle to institute the 1534 Act of Supremacy, which declared that Henry VIII, rather than the 'bishop of Rome', was (and always had been) the supreme head on earth of the Church in England (Ryrie, 2003). With the notable exceptions of the Bishop of Rochester John Fisher (1469–1535) and the former Lord Chancellor and internationally renowned humanist scholar Thomas More (1478–1535), whose reward for standing up for their principles was execution, the majority of Catholic traditionalists supported Henry's Royal Supremacy. Henry allowed his evangelical advisors, including Thomas Cromwell (1485–1540) and Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556), to institute a range of evangelical-leaning reforms, such as the removal of abused images

from parish churches, the dissolution of the monasteries, and the production of an official English translation of the Bible. But Henry, who had personally written against Luther and in defence of the seven sacraments in 1521, remained wedded to the traditional Latin liturgy of the Catholic Church, and was more than happy to see Sacramentarians (those who denied the real presence of Christ in the Eucharistic elements) receive the traditional punishment for heresy of burning at the stake. Thus it was actually Henry's long-awaited son, who became King Edward VI (1537–53; r. 1547–53) in 1547, schooled by evangelical tutors and advised by his evangelical uncle Edward Seymour (1506–52) and Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, who oversaw a truly Protestant Reformation in England (MacCulloch, 1999). In 1553 the pendulum swung back the other way, as Mary I (1516–58; r. 1553–8), the daughter of Henry VIII by his first wife, Catherine of Aragon (1485–1536), attempted to restore England to Catholicism and papal obedience (Duffy, 2009). Finally, in 1558, the Tudors' religious rollercoaster ground to an uneasy halt with the accession of Elizabeth I (1533–1603; r. 1558–1603), who instituted what by the standards of the day appeared to many of her more godly subjects a Church Settlement that, although Protestant in its essentials, was in many ways 'but halfly reformed'.

The inevitable question then presented itself: what were Christians to do in the face of an unsympathetic or tyrannous secular magistrate? Protestants in England during the reigns of Henry VIII and Mary I, and Catholics during the reigns of Edward VI and Elizabeth I, all had to grapple with the same crucial issue, albeit from opposing sides. Perhaps nowhere in Europe was the matter more acute, however, than in France, which was consumed by almost forty years of violent civil war and bloody sectarian slaughter between 1562 and 1598, punctuated by a series of grudging and increasingly ineffective Royal Edicts of Toleration and Pacification. Theories of resistance to tyrannical monarchy were initially developed by Lutheran princes in their fight against the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, and during the Interim of Augsburg hardline Gnesio-Lutherans in Magdeburg developed the idea that the Emperor, by enforcing a false religion, was breaking natural law, and thus might be opposed by the inferior magistrates of the empire, the princes (Kingdon, 1994: 201–2). Calvin developed this doctrine of the resistance of 'lesser magistrates' with reference to the Ephors of ancient Sparta, who had possessed a constitutional duty to resist the sovereign if he lapsed into tyranny. François Hotman (1524–90), Theodore Beza, and Philippe du Plessis-Mornay (1549–1623) all made further contributions to a body of radical 'resistance theory', based on conservative and non-sectarian sources, such as Canon and Roman Law, the writings of Scholastic theologians, and the judgments of Church Councils (Giesey, 1970; Skinner, 1998). 'Calvinist' resistance theory had peaked in France by 1584, when the death of Francis, Duc d'Alençon and d'Anjou (1555–84), meant that the Protestant Henri of Navarre (1553–1610) became heir apparent to the French throne. Attacks on monarchical legitimacy then became the primary preoccupation of the radical French Catholic League, who opposed both the Huguenots and the policy of toleration pursued by the French Crown. Plots by radical Catholic missionaries and fundamentalists in England which aimed at replacing the childless Elizabeth I with Mary Queen of Scots (r. 1542–67; d. 1587) exhibited a similar disregard for divinely instituted secular monarchy, although most religious minorities in early modern Europe, Catholic and Protestant, chose stoicism and obedience over plotting and resistance in the face of religious persecution.

The most persecuted groups in the wake of the Reformation were undoubtedly radicals and Anabaptists—religious sects which typically consisted of a gathered congregation of the self-professed godly, formed around a charismatic leader, who sought to separate themselves from the broader ungodly multitude. The groups that made up the so-called 'Radical Reformation' were many and varied, and defy clear categorization. Some, but not all, denied infant baptism, on the basis that the Biblical precedent for the sacrament was the immersion of the adult Christ in the waters of the River Jordan by John the Baptist; even for magisterial reformers such as Luther and Calvin, there were limits to the authority of *sola scriptura*. Other common beliefs included pacifism and a refusal to swear oaths; the latter in particular was a matter of grave concern to the secular authorities.

Early figures in the Radical tradition included Luther's erstwhile colleague at Wittenberg Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt (1486–1541), and Thomas Müntzer (1489–1525), who played a leading role in the German Peasants' War of 1524–6, one of the largest and bloodiest popular uprisings in European history. The Anabaptists' card was well and truly marked, however, by the events of 1534 in the German city of Münster. The city had gained a large number of adherents of the millenarian brand of Anabaptism espoused by Melchior Hoffman (1495–1543), and Jan Matthijs (1500–34), a Dutch convert to Melchiorite Anabaptism, prophesied that the city 'would be the site of the New Jerusalem and that God would effect the city's apocalyptic transformation at Easter 1543' (Gregory, 2015: 133). Anabaptism was accordingly adopted as the official religion of Münster, and private property was abolished, with all goods being held in common. Matthijs was killed in a skirmish with the forces of the bishop of Münster, and was replaced as leader of the movement by Jan Beukels van Leiden (1509–36), who scandalized international opinion even further by instituting polygamy. Eventually the doomed regime was crushed by Catholic and Protestant authorities acting in concert, a rare moment of ecumenical cooperation. While most Radicals and Anabaptists were peaceful and deeply spiritual individuals, their history was largely one of ongoing persecution and diaspora.

Political factors also helped to shape the progress of the Reformation in Central, Eastern, and Northern Europe. Bohemia was already home to a significant community of Hussites, followers of the medieval reformer Jan Hus (1369–1415) who had been burned to death at the Council of Constance in 1415. Hus' followers split into a number of different groupings, including the dominant moderate 'Utraquist' and more radical 'Taborite' factions. The 1485 Peace of Kutná Hora gave official recognition to the Utraquist Church in Bohemia, alongside the Catholic, meaning that this was the first legally sanctioned biconfessional European state (Haberken, 2015: 27). Under the Habsburg Emperor Rudolph II (1552–1612; r. 1576–1612), the 'Letter of Majesty' issued in 1609 officially recognized no fewer than five churches in Bohemia: Utraquist, Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, and Unity. However, the 1618 defenestration of Prague signalled the breakdown of religious coexistence, the start of the Thirty Years' War, and the re-Catholicization of Bohemia following the 1620 Battle of Bilá Hora (Haberken, 2015: 34–5).

p. 108 Elsewhere, Sigismund II Augustus (1548–72), King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania, granted de facto religious freedom to landowners in 1562, benefiting the growing Calvinist community as well as establishing Poland as a haven for persecuted radical anti-Trinitarian Christians, the Unitarians (Marshall, 2009: 34). By destroying the traditional power structures of the Catholic Church, the advance of the Ottoman Turks into Hungary aided the growth of Calvinism there, while in Northern Europe Lutheranism was the dominant force, establishing itself in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, under royal patronage (Marshall, 2009: 28).

## Beliefs, practices, and identities

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Discussions of top-down theological and political change barely scrape the surface of the impact of the Reformation on the religious beliefs, practices, and identities of ordinary people. John Bossy has gone so far as to suggest that the Reformation changed the very meaning of the term 'religion', from describing a body of believers in largely social terms to the modern definition of an abstract intellectual creed, or body of beliefs (Bossy, 1985). For the French historian John Delumeau, the Protestant and Catholic Reformations represented the first effective 'Christianization' of the majority of the peoples of Europe, who prior to the sixteenth century had remained fundamentally pagan and animist in their core beliefs (Delumeau, 1977). Few historians today would write off the effulgent Christian devotion of the later Middle Ages as essentially pagan, but the Reformation certainly helped to catalyse a series of significant changes in religious education, practice, and devotion.

Propaganda, polemic, and pedagogy were key battlegrounds from the very start of the Reformation. Protestant reformers sought initially to open the eyes of the people to what they saw as the lies and falsehood of the Catholic Church, and then to educate them, at first in basic and latterly in more advanced Protestant messages and doctrines. Their Catholic opponents aimed at first to respond to what they saw as the lies of their opponents and to highlight the evils of heresy, but the urge to educate the laity and to make them 'better' Christians was just as much a feature of the Catholic Reformation as it was in Protestant territories. The Reformation in Germany and elsewhere was a mass-media and a multimedia event, seizing upon the relatively new invention of printing with movable type as a principal means of disseminating attacks on the Catholic Church and explanations of evangelical doctrine. Part of Luther's genius as a reformer was to develop close ties with the printing industry, and the small town of Wittenberg quickly became one of the most important centres of printing in Germany (Pettegree, 2015). Luther also sought to communicate directly to the people, as well as to the religious and intellectual elites, by writing most of his treatises in the vernacular instead of Latin. His German prose was earthy, visceral, and immediate.

p. 109 Luther also built important relationships with artists such as Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) and in particular Lucas Cranach the Elder (c. 1472–1553), whose woodcuts offered a scathing critique of the antichristian venality and corruption of the Catholic Church. For example, Cranach's 1521 woodcut series *Passional Christi und Antichristi* consisted of thirteen pairs of woodcuts, which contrasted the simplicity and holiness of the life of Christ with the extravagance and venality of the Renaissance Papacy. In one such pair of images, Christ driving the moneylenders out of the temple (John 2:15) was juxtaposed with the pope profiting from the sale of indulgences. Cheap pamphlets—*Flugschriften*—were a powerful weapon in the spread of the early Lutheran Reformation, with treatises frequently copied, reprinted, or plagiarized without the author's knowledge or permission. Woodcuts in particular were capable of reaching a wide audience, and did not rely on traditional forms of literacy in order to communicate their message (Scribner, 1981).

As well as visual propaganda, oral forms of communication were also particularly important. Sermons and preaching were at the heart of the Reformation from the very beginning, and preaching was believed to be the principal means ordained by God for bringing about faith through conversion (Hunt, 2010). Recent studies have also shown that music was an important weapon in the reformers' arsenal. Lutheran reformers (including Martin Luther himself) wrote rousing original hymns set to popular tunes, such as *Ein feste burg ist unser Gott* ('A Mighty Fortress Is Our God'). Lutheran music could also express Protestant doctrines such as justification by faith alone, and so educate as well as inspire (Brown, 2005). Reformed Protestants were generally warier of the power of music to inflame the senses rather than engage the intellect, and so espoused a more stripped-back religious soundscape, the mainstay of which was the unaccompanied singing of metrical paraphrases of the texts contained in the Book of Psalms. Even so, in France and in England, metrical psalmody became an incredibly important and popular element of Protestant religious practice, and may well have helped the new religious faith to spread, as well as providing solace to embattled religious minorities during times of religious doubt or persecution (Willis, 2010). Despite (or perhaps because of) the long and rich musical tradition of the Catholic Church, the Twenty-Second Session of the Council of Trent (1562) called upon bishops to 'banish from all churches all those kinds of music, in which, whether by the organ, or in the singing, there is mixed up any thing lascivious or impure' (Waterworth, 1848: 161). However, the age of Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (c.1525–94) was also the age of Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643), and the ascetic aspirations of Trent soon gave way to the sonic extravagance of the baroque period.

Beyond sermons and the liturgy, one of the main ways of indoctrinating the laity into a proper understanding of the new (or old) faith was the catechism. Religious instruction was already being rapidly expanded during the later Middle Ages (Green, 1996: 15). During the Reformation, however, the practice became ubiquitous, and Protestants established a more consistent format, contents, and application of the



catechism, with Catholics soon following suit. Protestant catechisms contained four main sections: on the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Sacraments. Catholic catechisms often contained additional sections, on staples such as the Ave Maria, the Seven Deadly Sins, the Acts of Corporal and Spiritual Mercy, and so on. Later medieval catechetical material was generally declaratory in form, whereas post-Reformation ↪ catechisms almost always took the form of a dialogue, with interrogatories posed by a father, minister, or master, and detailed answers provided by the young catechumen (Green, 1996: 16). Luther himself wrote three catechisms: one for young children, one for more advanced students or adults, and one for use by ministers. In England, the official catechism contained within the Book of Common Prayer service for Confirmation was so brief that it prompted hundreds of unofficial and semi-official publications which offered a more advanced understanding of the Christian faith. The point of the catechism was to encourage the faithful not just to *memorize* the essentials of their faith, but to *understand* them.

The Ten Commandments, which had been neglected for much of the Middle Ages in favour of the Seven Deadly Sins, were catapulted to a new position of prominence in Reformation catechisms, because of their impeccable scriptural origin and credentials (Bossy, 1988). While Luther kept to the traditional Catholic numbering system (as advocated by the Church Father Augustine), Reformed Protestants renumbered the Decalogue in the manner of St Jerome, creating a separate Second Commandment against the making and worshipping of graven images out of the Catholic First, and eliding the Catholic Ninth and Tenth Commandments into a single prohibition against coveting (the same numbering as in Judaism). But Protestants of all stripes reinterpreted the function of God's Law. For Catholics, the commandments were one of a series of moral frameworks designed to help Christians avoid committing sin and to strive to do good works that might merit them salvation. For Protestants, the commandments were impossible to be kept, and existed to demonstrate to humanity its sinfulness and incapacity, in order to drive them to faith in Christ and the promises of the Gospel as the only possible route to salvation (Willis, 2017). *Learning* the Decalogue was one thing, therefore, but *understanding* it was something else entirely.

As much as it sought to transform popular understandings of religious doctrine through new pedagogical techniques, the Reformation also attempted to redraw the outlines of lay piety and popular religious practice. Much Protestant rhetoric centred on sweeping clean the Augean stable of Catholic devotion, with the commonest charges levelled at their religious opponents being idolatry and will-worship: that is, the direction of worship due solely to God to other beings, objects, creatures, or practices; and worship of God in a manner of human devising, rather than in accordance with 'His own will and direction'. However, popular religion was often slow to evolve and resistant to change. Scholarship on beliefs and practices relating to death and the dead, for example, has shown that many people were reluctant to abandon the sort of prayer for the departed which had been such a prominent feature of late medieval devotion (Marshall, 2002). Beliefs relating to other elements of the supernatural, such as ghosts and angels, were also slow to change, and Protestant subjects might sometimes seek to take advantage of the skills and services offered by magicians, cunning folk, and even Catholic priests, in an effort to harness divine power against the vicissitudes of daily life in early modern Europe. Protestant divines taught that mankind had no recourse to divine power in the ways that had been suggested by official, semi-official, and unofficial apotropaic practices in the later Middle Ages, such as the use of sacramentals to protect ↪ crops or cure diseases in humans and livestock (Scribner, 1993). Popular belief was not so easily curbed, and it was not uncommon after the Reformation for objects such as Bibles or images of reformers such as Luther himself to become imbued with a sense of sacred power (Scribner, 1986). Even the landscape might retain spiritual significance, and—as Alexandra Walsham has posited—it is more accurate to consider the ways in which religion at this time experienced waves of desacralization and resacralization, rather than a linear process of 'disenchantment' (Walsham, 2008, 2011).



While the Council of Trent brought about no significant change in terms of contentious Catholic doctrines, such as the number and nature of the sacraments and the status of purgatory, the Reformation did have a significant impact on aspects of Catholic religious and devotional practice. Research has shown, for example, that some of the more vibrant late medieval forms of piety and devotion, such as the purchase of indulgences and membership of religious guilds and confraternities, experienced a radical decline in investment and participation in the decades following the Luther affair. By the early seventeenth century, however, these practices had made up for lost ground, and often developed in new and significant ways. Elizabeth Tingle has demonstrated that, in Counter-Reformation France, indulgences had 'slowed to a trickle' by the mid-sixteenth century, as a result of the Protestant challenge, the turmoil of the religious wars, and a decline in the prestige and authority of the Papacy. But the practice began to recover after the Papal Jubilee of 1575, and by the 1590s local communities and congregations were seeking out papal pardons in ever-increasing numbers (Tingle, 2015: 156). Counter-Reformation piety drew in significant ways on the tradition of medieval mysticism, as associated with figures such as Julian of Norwich (1342–c.1416) and Catherine of Siena (1347–80), movements like the *Devotio Moderna*, and texts such as Thomas à Kempis' (1380–1471) *Imitatio Christi*, *The Imitation of Christ*, which became an early modern 'bestseller' (Von Habsburg, 2011). The Christocentrism, spiritualism, and mysticism of these medieval antecedents found early modern expression in movements such as Pietism, the mystical tradition within Radical Protestantism, and in the writings of Counter-Reformation figures, prominent among them the Basque nobleman and founder of the Jesuit Order Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556), and the Carmelite nun Teresa of Ávila (1515–82).

## Society

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Finally, how did the Reformation(s) reshape European society in the early modern period? Initially, the advent of Protestantism brought about a huge amount of social division and cultural dislocation, and clashes between Protestant and Catholic communities and authorities ushered in a spate of religious violence and persecution across Europe. In England, the reign of Henry VIII saw hundreds of people executed as traitors for denying the Royal Supremacy or as heretics for denying the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. His daughter Mary I burned to death almost three hundred ↵ men and women for their Protestant beliefs, whereas Elizabeth I maintained that she executed Catholics on the basis of political disloyalty rather than for religious reasons. Across Europe during the period of the Reformation, women suspected of being witches were executed by Catholic and Protestant authorities alike, as were Anabaptists and other religious radicals. Felix Manz (1498–1527) was the first Anabaptist to be executed by a magisterial Protestant regime when he was sentenced to drowning by the Zürich government in 1527, while the Genevan authorities sentenced the anti-Trinitarian Spanish humanist Michael Servetus (c.1511–53) to death by burning in 1553. Popular and official attacks were also conducted against images across the period of the Reformation, most notably the 'Beeldenstorm', which occurred in the Low Countries in 1566. Violence perpetrated by Christians against Christians was one of the defining themes of the Reformation, most notably during the French Religious Wars in the sixteenth century and the Thirty Years' War in the seventeenth. The historian of early modern France Natalie Zemon Davis, in her seminal article 'The Rites of Violence', sought to explain the ritualized forms through which religious violence might find expression. In a nutshell, Protestants more frequently targeted symbols of Catholic religion, such as consecrated hosts, holy statues, or clergy, while Catholics saw all Protestants as an infection in the body social which needed to be exterminated wholesale (Davis, 1973). It was the forces unleashed by the Reformation which resulted in the assassination of two French kings, Henry III (r. 1574–89) in 1589 and Henry IV (r. 1589–1610) in 1610, and which saw the execution of Charles I of England (r. 1625–49) on the orders of Parliament in 1649.

The story is not one of unalloyed gloom, however. In part as a response to the significant historiographical emphasis on persecution and violence, historical research has also found plenty of evidence of religious

moderation, and of practical and even principled examples of toleration during the two centuries following the outbreak of the Reformation. In England, for instance, while virulent anti-Catholicism was a central aspect of popular Protestantism, it tended to be abstract or distant figures—such as the pope of the day, Catholic rulers like King Philip II of Spain (1527–98; r. 1556–98), or Jesuit or missionary priests—who were most easily hated and demonized, whereas the ‘church papist’ or the recusant next door might expect more reasonably to both ‘get along’ with his neighbours and ‘get on’ in local society (Sheils, 2009). Toleration of religious difference was rarely espoused in the early modern period, and when it was, it was usually envisaged as a temporary measure of political expediency. None of the main religious groupings born out of the Reformation wanted permanent principled religious tolerance: their ultimate goal was a version of religious concord in which everybody was converted to their own way of thinking (Turchetti, 1991). True toleration in a modern, principled, ecumenical sense, was a later development, albeit one anticipated in the writings of figures such as Pierre Bayle (1647–1706), John Locke (1632–1704), and the early Enlightenment (Grell and Scribner, 1996). Practical toleration did exist in the early modern period, however. Politically, it was instituted through measures such as the Religious Peace of Augsburg, the Treaty of Westphalia, the English Act of Toleration, and the various Edicts of Pacification passed by the French Crown during the Wars

p. 113 ↳ of Religion. Pragmatically, it also evolved from the bottom up, as local communities learned ways of living together without persecution or bloodshed (Kaplan, 2007).

That said, there is a sense in which division was the true legacy of the Reformation: over the early modern period dividing lines emerged and solidified that would never again be healed. This process, of the building of separate religious ‘confessions’, has been the subject of a great deal of scholarship, especially in Germany, and given rise to a much-debated ‘confessionalization thesis’. The term comes from the Latin *confessio*, a religious confession of faith, and during the first decades of the Reformation, the various churches of Europe sought to define themselves through the construction and promulgation of such confessions, documents which acted as normative statements of doctrine and faith. Familiar and prominent examples include the Lutheran Augsburg Confession (1530), the Reformed Helvetic Confessions (1536 and 1566), the English Thirty-Nine Articles (1563), and the Canons of the Council of Trent (1564). Confessions of faith, the thesis argues, in turn gave rise to confessions of people: internally coherent and externally exclusive communities with distinct institutions, membership, and beliefs. The confessionalization thesis, however, is not just about the growth of religious communities, but rather the mutual development of church, state, and society during the early modern period. Confessional groupings entered into alliances with the developing states of early modern Europe in a symbiotic relationship, in which the coercive power of the state was not only justified and enhanced by churches, but also utilized to police the religious beliefs and practices of its citizens. One of the proponents of the confessionalization thesis, Heinz Schilling, has written that:

Religion and politics, state and church, were structurally linked together, so that under the specific conditions of the early modern period the effects that religion and the church had upon society were not separate parts of a larger phenomenon, but rather affected the entire social system and formed the central axis of state and society...

(Deventer, 2004: 407)

The confessionalization thesis therefore puts the Reformation(s) and the churches to which it gave rise at the heart of processes of state formation and social change across Catholic and Protestant Europe during the early modern period.

Finally, while it is barely possible to scratch the surface of a topic as enormous as the social consequences of the Reformation here, it is important to mention briefly the work that has been done on the impact of the Reformation(s) on gender, and vice versa. Medieval and early modern Europe remained fundamentally patriarchal societies, whose misogyny was (and continued to be) founded upon a range of intellectual

authorities, including classical humoral theory and Biblical testimony (Wiesner-Hanks, 2008). Medieval society offered women a range of opportunities and role models, such as the option of a religious life as a nun, and the powerful and revered image of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose devotional significance on the eve of the Reformation was only slightly subordinate to that of her son. These models were rooted in traditionally gendered Christian virtues of meekness, chastity, piety, and obedience, but abbesses (for example) could become powerful figures in their own right. The ending of monasticism by Protestant reformers, and the spiritual downgrading of the Virgin Mary and a host of lesser female saints, therefore, constituted a significant loss of independence and authority for women in Protestant territories. At the same time, Protestants, with their advocacy of clerical marriage, put much more emphasis on the dignity of reproduction and the family than Catholics. Overall the differences probably evened themselves out, and if women's social position was not much improved by the Reformation, it was not much worsened by it either. Informally, however, women were often pivotal figures in the progress (or not) of the Reformation, and in the religious education of the young. Women were key sustainers of imprisoned Protestants during the reign of Mary I (Freeman, 2000), for example, and women could be powerful (and occasionally controversial) figures in the post-Reformation English Catholic community (Lake and Questier, 2011). In short, the Reformation shaped women's lives in powerful ways (Laqua-O'Donnell, 2014), but it also had an impact on masculinity, especially in the creation of that curious new Protestant species, the married clergyman.

## Conclusion

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Historians are increasingly in agreement around the idea of a 'long Reformation'. In other words, the Reformation was not done and dusted by the middle decades of the sixteenth century, as represented by convenient end dates such as the 1555 Peace of Augsburg or the 1559 Elizabethan Settlement. In some (but by no means all) cases the essential political and theological outlines of the Reformation had been mapped out by this point, but its religious, social, and cultural aftershocks continued until at least the end of the sixteenth century, and more realistically until the end of the seventeenth. Not all historians would go quite as far as Brad Gregory, for whom most of the ills of contemporary society—'wasteful consumerism, exploitative capitalism, unbounded selfishness', 'unthinking secularism' and 'a "hyperpluralism" of creeds and philosophies' resulting in moral confusion—have their origins in the religious tergiversations of the age of Reformation (Gregory, 2012; cf. Kaplan, 2013). But it is clear that the Reformation both initiated and interacted with a number of trends and processes across the early modern period which in various ways went on to help shape the world in which we live today.

From time to time, historians like to ask the question: was the Reformation a success or a failure (e.g. Strauss, 1975; Parker, 1992; Haigh, 2001)? It is clearly possible to identify and explain successes and failures on all sides during the period, but it is increasingly clear that this is probably the wrong question to be asking. For a start, 'success' and 'failure' are subjective categories, which invite insoluble questions about perspective and criteria. Whose version of 'success' should we be most concerned with, and how should it be measured? Ultimately, it is not the responsibility of historians—or anyone else—to pass judgement on the success of the Reformation. Better that we should seek to understand the complexity, extent, and magnitude of the transformations which the forces unleashed by the Reformation(s) wrought upon the churches, nations, societies, cultures, and individuals of early modern Europe. That should be challenge—and reward—enough for anybody.

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### CHAPTER

## 7 The Enlightenment and Religion in Europe

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### Abstract

This chapter on Enlightenment and religion in Europe brings together the evidence relating to an understanding of the relationship seen in broader terms. Manichean interpretations arguing for the total incompatibility of Enlightenment and religion are no longer tenable. Evidence from the history of Roman Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Protestantism, and Judaism is discussed in order to illustrate how reflection on ideas of natural religion, natural law, and the interplay of reason and revelation, by thinkers firmly grounded in traditions of religious faith, allowed a broadening of mutual understanding between the Enlightenment and European religious traditions and contributed to the growth of ideas of toleration.

**Keywords:** [Enlightenment](#), [natural religion](#), [natural law](#), [revelation](#), [toleration](#), [Roman Catholicism](#), [Orthodoxy](#), [Protestantism](#), [Judaism](#)

**Subject:** [History of Religion](#), [Religion](#)

**Series:** [Oxford Handbooks](#)

THE interplay between the Enlightenment and religion in European cultural history is complex and can be observed and examined on many levels. In what follows an attempt will be made to consider the subject from two points of view. First attention will be directed to the interaction between the Enlightenment, that is the secular ideologies and value systems of modernity, and the various forms of organized religion in European society. Secondly—and more briefly—the substantive relation between the Enlightenment and religion will be considered as it surfaces in European philosophy and social thought.

The chronological frame of reference for the discussion of the two issues will be the long eighteenth century, from the period of the ‘crisis of European conscience’, to use the classic formulation of Paul Hazard (Hazard, 1963), to the ferment on the eve of the French Revolution. In the debates, confrontations, and intellectual power struggles over religion and its place in civilized society that emerged in European culture in a period of just over a hundred years (1680–1789), all the fundamental, indeed existential, questions about faith and reason, the content of spiritual life and the spiritual foundations of society were raised and re-examined. Thus, it becomes obvious that the Enlightenment as an ‘age’ in the cultural history of Europe has not been a period exclusively dominated by scepticism and crusades against religion; rather it involved

serious engagements with the question of religion, its multiple meanings, and significance for humanity. It is equally evident that earlier understandings of the relation between religion and Enlightenment have been revised to a considerable extent. A rather more complex picture has been established by recent research, a point of view which presents a different relationship between the religious traditions of Europe and the culture of the Enlightenment. The new picture, moreover, calls for serious questioning and the qualification of earlier views, that is, those that argued for an embattled relationship and unconditional hostility between religion in its multiple expressions and the ideas of the Enlightenment.

p. 119 The revisionist view will be put forward in this chapter. This will also involve an expansion of the geographical horizon. Besides the conventional appraisal of the interactions of Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish religious traditions with the manifestations of the Enlightenment, the evidence of corresponding phenomena in the Orthodox world in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe will be taken into account, in order to construct a more complete, and nuanced picture of the overall phenomenon, which was—without doubt—one of the mechanisms that set in motion the advent of European modernity.

## The Enlightenment and organized religion

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A conventional view, which is still heard today, tends to regard the main forms of organized religion in Europe, that is the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches, as representing systems of belief and values that confronted the intellectual changes produced by the Enlightenment with unconditional hostility. And at least some of the Enlightenment's most vocal public engagements, such as Voltaire's campaign 'Écrasez l'infâme', generated by the Calas affair (Lauriol, 2006), together with the philosophical outlook of the movement's most radical expressions, do appear to confirm the incompatibility between Enlightenment and religion. The picture, however, is both richer and more nuanced than these clear-cut binaries and Manichean interpretations indicate.

The historical record suggests that such interpretations represent a retrospective reading coloured by the reactions of the churches to the French Revolution, reactions which were indeed hostile and deeply polemical, and were motivated by the anti-religious policies and rituals of the Revolution itself. Up to 1789 things were different: here the evidence indicates that the churches showed considerable willingness to re-examine their pastoral strategies and to take initiatives consonant with the spirit of the 'age of reason'. It is equally clear that the strategies of the churches over a range of issues depended to a considerable extent on the intellectual make-up of individual ecclesiastical leaders, popes, and patriarchs, at the head of either the Roman Catholic or the Orthodox Church. Although this did not always guarantee continuity in the policies of these churches, it did indicate that the older churches had not remained hermetically closed to the challenges of the age of Enlightenment.

## The Roman Catholic Church

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p. 120 The Roman Catholic Church entered the eighteenth century seriously preoccupied with the question of Jansenism. The radical Augustinian spirituality of the Jansenist movement had, since its emergence in the mid-seventeenth century, presented a serious challenge to Roman Catholicism and to the formalism and rigidity of the Counter-Reformation as represented primarily by the baroque religious outlook of the Jesuits. The Jesuits won the struggle and under Pope Clement XI (1700–21), Jansenism was twice condemned, especially in the papal bull *Unigenitus* in 1713. Despite the official condemnation, Jansenism as a spiritual option survived and remained a factor of dissension within the Roman Catholic Church, interlocking, especially in France, with other forms of dissent and criticism that eventually contributed to the advent of the French Revolution.

The need for the Church to find ways to come to terms with the challenges of an age of criticism and moral questioning was voiced by the most important thinker in the ranks of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in the period of Early Enlightenment, François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon, Archbishop of Cambrai (1695–1715). Fénelon was primarily known as a tutor to the French *dauphin*, crown prince, in the closing years of the reign of Louis XIV. In his historical novel, *Les aventures de Télémaque*, written for the instruction of his royal tutee, he painted the image of the ideal ruler as an executor of the law as against the bearer of absolute power. In outlining the model of a virtuous and competent king, Fénelon also argued for a recovery of humanism and the civic virtues in a society based on the fraternity of human beings. Christian society should be shaped on this model, not on the hypocrisy of excessive expressions of piety or a false and inhuman asceticism. The unstated targets of Fénelon's criticism were both the Jansenists and the Jesuits, whose excesses he detested and judged incompatible with the authentic evangelical teaching of Christianity (Im Hof, 1994: 174–80). Fénelon's criticism could appear convincing, on account of his impeccable credentials, secured by his important writings in defence of the faith, primarily the *Démonstration de l'existence de Dieu* (1713), in which he had presented a serious refutation of atheism, which avoided resorting to polemics or to unreasonable attacks against theological opponents (Israel, 2001: 494–5).

It was the kind of thinking represented by Fénelon that hinted at a new religious and moral strategy for the Church, away from the ossification of the faith behind the pomposity of Counter-Reformation religiosity as projected most militantly by the Jesuits. One pope at least in the mid-eighteenth century seemed to hear the message. Benedict XIV (1740–58), born Prosper Lambertini, an erudite and open-minded man, moved cautiously to take the Church into the Age of Enlightenment. He initiated pastoral policies which very obviously constituted reactions to and breaks in the disciplinarian heritage of the Counter-Reformation: he encouraged readings of the Bible by the faithful under the guidance of parish priests; he limited the excessive number of ecclesiastical holidays which disrupted normal economic activity; and he relaxed church censorship. Although the *Index librorum prohibitorum* was maintained, it was used with greater restraint. That said, important works of the Enlightenment, including in 1751 Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*, were placed on it, suggesting the limits of even the supreme pontiff's freedom of action. The pope also initiated a process in order to revoke the ban on the major sources on the heliocentric theory of the universe, including the works of Copernicus and Galileo. Benedict even felt appreciation for the literary writings of Voltaire, with whom he maintained a civil correspondence and accepted the dedication of Voltaire's play *Mahomet* to him in 1750, commenting that he had read it with 'great pleasure' (Besterman, 1969: 250–1).

Benedict XIV's pastoral policies coincided with the philosophical strivings of the leading lights of the Roman Catholic Enlightenment, Lodovico Antonio Muratori in Modena and Antonio Genovesi (1713–69) in Naples, to achieve a reconciliation of faith and reason and build an intellectual and moral renewal of the Church on this foundation. However, the further radicalization of the secular philosophy of the Enlightenment undermined such attempts and provided arguments and reasons for an anti-Enlightenment reaction within the Church. Thus, under Benedict's successor, Clement XIII (1759–69), major works of the Enlightenment, including the *Encyclopédie* in 1759, and also works which were openly materialistic such as Claude Adrien Helvétius' *De l'Esprit*, were placed on the *Index*. Under subsequent pontificates the trend continued with the condemnation not only of the materialistic publications of Baron d'Holbach and Julien Offray de La Mettrie, but also of works by Denis Diderot and Voltaire.

The Church and the papacy also found itself under serious pressure from the secular states, which in a period of centralizing absolutism wanted to exercise more effective control over their territorial domains. This in fact meant that the states demanded of the papacy the termination of the tutelage it traditionally attempted to exercise over secular authorities in Roman Catholic countries and especially the abolition of one of the most effective tentacles whereby this was done: the Jesuit order. The role of the Jesuits elicited widespread antipathy and hatred and generated pressures on the Church to withdraw the order from the several countries of Catholic Europe. The first such initiative came from the reformist prime minister of

Portugal, First Marquis of Pombal, who expelled the order from the kingdom and its overseas empire in 1759. This set off a chain reaction in all Catholic kingdoms in Europe. In 1764, following a decision of the *Parlement* (Supreme Court) of Paris, the Jesuit order was expelled from France and two years later, in 1766, they were expelled from Spain. The actions of the two greatest Roman Catholic sovereigns in Europe were soon followed by the minor Catholic powers, Naples, Parma, and the Knights of Malta. Eventually a new pope, Clement XIV (1769–74), issued the bull *Dominus ac Redemptor* abolishing the order altogether in 1773.

The dissolution of the Jesuits was hailed at the time as a great victory of the Enlightenment. In an anonymous pamphlet, entitled *Sur la destruction des Jésuits en France*, published in 1765, immediately after the expulsion of the order from France, the editor of the *Encyclopédie*, Jean-Baptiste le Rond d'Alembert, celebrated the prospects for the improvement of national education in France made possible by its liberation from Jesuit control (Venturi, 1976: 30–43). The whole affair of course illustrated in multiple ways the ironies with which history is often replete. The Jesuits were expelled from Roman Catholic countries but they were received and given roles in national education in non-Catholic states, in Lutheran Prussia under King Frederick the Great (r. 1740–86) and in Orthodox Russia under Empress Catherine II the Great (r. 1762–96), both of whom in welcoming the Jesuits wished to advertise their commitment to religious toleration.

p. 122 Substantively the hostility elicited by the Jesuits on the part of the representatives of the Enlightenment involved another irony. The Jesuits formed the one branch of Roman Catholicism that was actively engaged in scientific research and in practical programmes of educational and social improvement, especially in their overseas missionary activities. They could, therefore, under conditions of mutual toleration, provide a bridge between the Church and the Enlightenment in a partnership in the service of humanity and knowledge. The passions of fanaticism on both sides and a failure in understanding precluded at the heyday of the Enlightenment such a possibility from materializing.

The unconditional capitulation of the Roman Church on the Jesuit question was a dramatic indication of its weakness in the face of the increasing power of secular states. This was also formally illustrated by a series of agreements and concordats, concluded by the Holy See with Roman Catholic kingdoms around Europe, surrendering to them the papacy's rights over episcopal appointments, control of education, and other issues of concern to the Church. Such concordats were concluded with Spain (1737 and 1753), Portugal (1740), Sardinia, and Naples (1741), generalizing the policy of 'Gallicanism' consistently followed by the 'Most Christian' monarchs of France since the seventeenth century (Anderson, 1961: 314–35).

The papacy's relations went through serious strain with another Catholic power as well: the Habsburg Empire. In this case the papacy found itself embarrassed and irritated at the reformist policies followed originally by Empress Maria Theresa (r. 1745–65) but especially by her son and successor Joseph II (r. 1765–90) in the 1780s. Joseph was a devout Catholic but also an enlightened and reform-minded monarch determined to bring progress to his domains through a policy of improved education, toleration for the multiple religious communities, and reform of the Church. This caused tensions with the Holy See but an eventual conflict was forestalled by the coming of the French Revolution and the broader realignment of political forces and policies it brought all over Europe. Reactions to reform projects like Josephism, which were perceived as threats to the Church, prepared the ground for a wholesale retraction of Roman Catholicism from the reformist spirit of the Age of Enlightenment (Krieger, 1970: 286–90).

The coming of Revolution marked the end of whatever willingness had been shown by the Church to go part of the way in the direction urged by Enlightened Catholicism earlier in the century. The Revolution caused alarm and provoked an active campaign of opposition to novelty and change, including a condemnation of French revolutionary principles and the Civil Constitution of the Clergy in 1791 by Pope Pius VI (1775–99), followed by a new condemnation of Jansenism in 1794. The Church became increasingly identified with the doctrine and ideologies of the Counter-Revolution expressed by reactionary ideologues like Joseph de

Maistre and Louis de Bonald, both of whom appealed to Christian tradition as a counterweight against the rising tide of revolutionary change and Enlightenment in European society. The circumstantial alliance with the Counter-Revolution earned the Roman Catholic Church the rather simplistic and considerably distorted reputation of the irreconcilable opponent of the Enlightenment that has lingered in the literature for much too long.

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## The Orthodox Church

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### The Russian world

In the Orthodox regions of Europe in the east and south-east of the continent, a rather different encounter of organized religion with the Enlightenment took place in the course of the eighteenth century. In the Russian Empire this was an age of reform, which meant modernization on the West European model and centralization of power. The period of change was initiated under Emperor Peter I the Great (r. 1682–1725). Peter's reforms brought about important changes in the administration of the Russian Orthodox Church. The eighteenth century opened with the death of Patriarch Adrian of Moscow (c.1626–1700, patriarch 1690–1700). Peter determined that the office of the patriarch and the power it secured to its holder was an impediment to the total control of the Church by the state. He left the position vacant and eventually, in 1718, he abolished the patriarchal dignity in the Orthodox Church of Russia.

The emperor issued a *Spiritual Regulation*, drafted by his confidant in ecclesiastical affairs, Archbishop Feofan Prokopovich (d. 1736), who considered the role of the monarch of critical significance in the affairs of the Church. This view was consonant with the Protestant ecclesiological ideas that Peter had heard about during an early visit to England in 1698, when he consulted with Bishop Gilbert Burnet (1643–1715). This was the background to the establishment, in 1721, of the 'Most Holy Governing Synod' as the highest authority in the Church of Russia.

Thus the Holy Synod replaced the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia as the highest Russian ecclesiastical authority and was recognized as such by the Patriarch of Constantinople Jeremias III (1716–26, 1733) and the heads of the other Orthodox churches (Delikanis, 1905: 231–6). It was composed of eleven members drawn from all three hieratic grades in the Church, with the Metropolitans of Kyiv, Moscow, and St. Petersburg as permanent members. Its seat was moved to St. Petersburg and it was presided over by the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg. To be valid, its actions and decisions required the approval of the imperial procurator, the 'eye of the Czar', whose countersignature was necessary on all documents.

The Church of Russia remained under the Holy Synod until the end of imperial Russia. The patriarchate was re-established on 5 November 1917, just a few days after the communist revolution of October of that year. The intention of Peter's reforms was to bring the Church under effective state control in order not only to modernize it but to turn it into an agency of change in Russian culture and society. This ambitious programme was obviously a challenging, indeed almost impossible, task in the Russian context. The aspirations of ecclesiastical reform included the improvement of education and the training of clergy in order to combat superstition which was a very serious feature in peasant society.

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The Enlightenment programme in the Orthodox Church of Russia took years to acquire substance and to produce results. Peter forcefully imposed the administrative changes and state control, but substantive measures of modernization of ecclesiastical life and practices of faith had to wait for later reigns. Under his daughter and successor Empress Elizabeth (r. 1741–61), a more active campaign of religious instruction of the peasant masses was put in place in the hope of containing and rooting out the more extreme forms of

popular superstition. The Holy Synod attempted to ensure the success of its policies through tighter control of diocesan administration.

The moment of greatest influence of Enlightenment ideas on Russian Orthodoxy came during the reign of Catherine II the Great. The Empress' ambition to be one of the great rulers in the service of *Lumières* and reason, brought about important further reforms in the Church and encouraged remarkable intellectual developments in the direction of an Orthodox Enlightenment in Russia. In the context of her modernization policies Catherine introduced a number of secularization measures: declaring the religious neutrality of the state, limiting the independence of ecclesiastical courts and seminaries, reducing the number of monasteries, and confiscating a significant part of ecclesiastical and monastic lands. To apply her policies, she sought the collaboration of ecclesiastical personalities and scholars who shared her views on the need to bring the Russian Church into the age of reason. Two leading theological scholars, Platon Levshin (d. 1812) and Gabriel Petrov (d. 1801), assisted the Empress in her effort to bring the Enlightenment into Russian Orthodoxy by assuming top ecclesiastical positions: Platon as Metropolitan of Moscow and Gabriel as Metropolitan of Novgorod. They both employed the language of reason and moral reconstruction in support of purifying the Church of superstition and disorder caused by unruly vagrant priests and monks. Control of the Church and supervision of the reforms and their application was secured through the appointment of 'upholders of good orders', who were charged with the task of overseeing the operation of local dioceses (Dixon, 1999).

Platon's major achievement came in the field of religious education. He presided over the establishment of an empire-wide network of theological seminaries, which contributed hugely to the improvement of the education of priests. Religious training in these establishments was conducted in Latin and the material of instruction bore considerable Western influence, both from Protestant theology emanating from German universities, primarily Halle, and from Jesuit formalism brought by the exiled Jesuits who were welcomed by Catherine II after the dissolution of the order.

These Western affinities of Russian religious education in the Age of Enlightenment motivated to a considerable extent the Orthodox revival that emerged after the turn of the nineteenth century and reshaped not only theological thought and religious practice but also, to a considerable extent, Russian culture as a whole. Toleration was an important principle of the Enlightenment, to which the Russian reform movement paid appropriate respect—at least in theory. As noted, Catherine II proclaimed the neutrality of the state in questions of religion and made toleration one of the principles of her policies. In practice, however, things were more complex, less satisfactory, and less ideologically clear cut.

p. 125 In the early part of the eighteenth century, following the reforms of Peter I, considerable pressure was put on the schismatic communities of Old Believers to conform to the officially established Church. And during the reign of Elizabeth, church and state closed ranks in trying to convert non-Christian groups in the central Volga region. This policy brought about half a million people into the Orthodox Church. Evangelization and mission, however, did not constitute a peaceful or painless process and considerable violence was employed by zealots on the ground in forcing Christian faith on the new converts.

Under Catherine II toleration was taken more seriously. The Empress admitted in her correspondence with Diderot that toleration served the interests of the state better than persecution. Accordingly, exiled Old Believers were encouraged to return from Poland where they had been driven by persecution. Their communities were relocated in the new territories brought into the Russian Empire in the areas north of the Black Sea. Various forms of discrimination at their expense were lifted, despite the resistance of churchmen, especially from among the episcopate, who feared that the Old Believers might corrupt the faith with their erroneous beliefs. The Muslim population of the same regions were also spared forced conversion (Dixon, 2006: 326–30).

In the task of incorporating the newly acquired territories of 'New Russia' into the empire, Catherine enlisted the services of two distinguished Greek clergymen scholars, both of them born in the island of Corfu, Evgenios Voulgaris (1716–1806) and Nikiphoros Theotokis (1731–1800). Although ordained celibate priests from an early age, both had acquired renown as scholars of the Enlightenment. Voulgaris had been a proponent of modern philosophy and saw no incompatibility between faith and reason, following the German philosopher Christian Wolff (1679–1754). He had in fact written a treatise on religious toleration in which he attempted to modify some of Voltaire's more uncompromising positions. Theotokis was the leading authority on Newtonian physics in South-Eastern Europe. They were called upon by Catherine to serve the empire in New Russia by assuming episcopal positions. Evgenios at Poltava became Archbishop of Kherson and Slaviansk, a post at which he was succeeded by Nikiphoros, who subsequently served the empire further east as Archbishop of Astrakhan and Stavropol (Batalden, 1982; Bruess, 1997). The cases of the two Greek prelates illustrate how Enlightenment and religion could converge, not simply in the service of the Orthodox empire but also in the service of what was conceived as the expansion Christian civilization into backward and unenlightened regions.

## The Greek East

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In the Greek East, the four ancient patriarchates of the Orthodox Church (Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem) had been under Ottoman rule: Constantinople since the fall of the city in 1453, and the three Middle Eastern churches since the conquest of their territories by the Ottomans in the sixteenth century. The conquest transformed the conditions of existence of the four Orthodox patriarchates in drastic ways. Whereas under the Eastern Roman Empire until 1453 the Ecumenical Patriarchate had been an imperial Church, a guarantor of political legitimacy in domestic order and a critical factor in the external affairs of the empire, in the non-Christian empire the Church was recognized only as a 'supervisor of the erroneous religious beliefs' of the infidel subjects. The main task of the Church became to safeguard the survival of the faith and of its Christian flock: on the one hand from the many pressures coming from the wielders of power, not least the temptation of conversion to the ruling faith, and on the other from the proselytizing activities of Western religious confessions. The Patriarch of Constantinople assumed the role of the representative of all Orthodox alongside the Ottoman authorities, and gradually the other patriarchs, especially Alexandria and Jerusalem (although canonically independent of Constantinople) moved their residence to Istanbul in order to attend to the affairs of their churches through the good offices of the Ecumenical Patriarch.

The Church attempted to cope with the conditions and the vagaries of subjection by strengthening the faith and sustaining Christian society both spiritually and materially. Early on, in the course of the sixteenth century, the Church's strategy of survival was expressed primarily through a sustained effort of reviving monasticism: first as an organizing mechanism that might contribute to the material sustenance especially of the rural masses among the faithful, and second as a support to the faith of the people at a time of multiple pressures to convert. Thus, during the sixteenth century the great monastic complexes at Mount Athos and Meteora went through a period of renewal and reconstruction, while important new foundations sprang up throughout the countryside in continental Greece, from Macedonia to the Peloponnese, and the islands.

In the following century, the Patriarchate of Constantinople under Patriarch Cyril I Loukaris (1612; 1620–3; 1623–33; 1633–4; 1634–5; 1637–8) went through a dramatic but abortive phase of attempted reforms on many fronts, which brought the Orthodox Church into close contact with Western Protestantism, especially Genevan Calvinism. This was Orthodoxy's defence against Roman Catholic pressures exercised through the activities of monastic orders upon the Church and the faithful. The Jesuits in Istanbul and other major cities at the centre of the empire, and the Franciscans in Palestine, were threatening the integrity and the traditional rights of the Orthodox Church in those regions. Patriarch Cyril eventually failed in his heroic

reform project and was martyred by the Ottomans on the accusations of the Jesuits, who described him as a foreign agent on account of his relations with Protestant powers. Thus, the project of the reform of the Church was aborted and a period of defensiveness, inwardness, and anti-Protestant polemics followed for the rest of the seventeenth century (Kitromilides, 2006).

p. 127 The next stage in the Church's strategy for the defence of the faith and the safeguarding of the Orthodox people from conversion was undertaken in the eighteenth century through measured openings towards the Enlightenment. A conventional view of the history of the Orthodox Church, as expressed for instance in authoritative sources such as Steven Runciman's *The Great Church in Captivity*, or Gerald R. Cragg's *The Church in the Age of Reason*, would totally exclude any affinity between Orthodoxy and Enlightenment (Runciman, 1968; Cragg, 1972). Yet a careful reading of the sources and ↴ evidence from eighteenth-century Orthodox ecclesiastical history would reveal a more complex and very much richer picture. Relevant evidence points to the fact that in the pre-revolutionary eighteenth century, the Patriarchate of Constantinople under particular patriarchs showed remarkable openness to the Enlightenment and its exponents in Greek culture.

The foremost example of this was the enlistment at mid-century of the services of already mentioned Evgenios Voulgaris, the Enlightenment's leading spokesman in Greek culture at the time, in a major project of educational renewal under the aegis of the Church. This was the project of the Athonite Academy, a college of higher learning set up on Mount Athos with the intention of training clergymen and scholars to serve the Church in its administrative, pastoral, and educational activities. Voulgaris was called upon in 1753 to take over the school originally founded by the Vatopedi Monastery in 1749 and to bring it up to date 'by means of changes and reforms', as it was explicitly stated in the official patriarchal and synodal *sigillium* of Patriarch Cyril V, charging him with the task.

Voulgaris took the charge with great enthusiasm, as testified in a letter he wrote to a former student, Kyprianos the Cypriot, urging him to join him on the teaching staff of the Academy. From the letter we hear a very lyrical description of the natural environment of the school and we also get an outline of the curriculum, which besides the classics (Homer, Herodotus, Thucydides, Plato, Demosthenes) also included the 'systems of modern philosophy', French, German, and English. Surviving manuscripts of Voulgaris's lecture notes help clarify this information: the systems of the moderns included works by Descartes, Christian Wolff, and Locke's *Essay*. We are also informed that Voulgaris was trying to bring a professor of Latin from the University of Halle to teach at Athos (Kitromilides, 2007: Study VII).

Despite the auspicious beginnings of the project, dissension among the students motivated by rival traditionalist teachers on the staff who resented Voulgaris' innovative teaching, eventually led to his resignation in 1759. The Academy continued its operation under another scholar, Nikolaos Zerzoulis, who was known as a proponent of Newtonian physics. Voulgaris himself, after a few months of waiting, was given a new charge by Patriarch Seraphim II (1757–61) to reform the Patriarchal Academy in Constantinople itself, a task which he carried out for two years before leaving for Leipzig where he published his major works, his treatise on *Logic* and his writings on toleration. It is clear that his presence at the Athonite Academy, though short, left an important intellectual legacy which lingered until the early nineteenth century.

p. 128 The openings to the Enlightenment by the leadership of the Orthodox Church were motivated by a deep awareness of the need to build up the defences of the faith by strengthening the education of the faithful at a time marked by the extensive incidence of conversions to Islam in traditionally Orthodox regions of the Western Balkans. At the same time, however, a sense of urgency about upgrading the training of future ecclesiastical leaders and teachers at Orthodox schools, in order to enable the Church to respond to these challenges, stimulated a similar readiness to accept new ideas. That said, it is important to notice in this connection that despite conflicts in the ranks of ↴ scholars and teachers between innovators and



traditionalists, who felt threatened by the better training and qualifications of the followers of the Enlightenment and often accused them of heretical views, the ecclesiastical leadership (until 1789) for the most part kept its distance from such disputes. It should also be pointed out that at a time when the Inquisition and the *Index* were still in operation in the Western church, in the Orthodox Church in the pre-revolutionary eighteenth century there was only one condemnation of a scholar for his philosophical views. This was the story of Methodios Anthrakitis in the 1720s. Methodios, a teacher at Ioannina, was accused of heresy by his opponents for teaching modern philosophy. This led to his condemnation by the Church in 1723, which forced him to retract and burn his philosophical notebooks. He was eventually exonerated and allowed to teach but only Aristotelian philosophy. The burning of his manuscripts, nevertheless, has destroyed all evidence of the content of his original teaching, which included elements of contemporary Western philosophy, probably Malebranche and Descartes.

Things changed radically after 1789 and especially after the regicide of 1793, which was interpreted in the Orthodox East, as it had been in the Latin West, as the political consequence of the new philosophy. Following that dramatic climax, the Orthodox Church reconsidered its attitude toward the Enlightenment and in the 1790s a campaign against modern philosophy and science got under way, reaching a peak in the fateful year of 1798, in the climate of panic generated by Napoleons's campaign in Egypt. It was in this period of ideological polarization and conflict that the second condemnation of an Enlightenment philosopher also took place. That was the case of Christodoulos Pamplekis, a former student of Voulgaris at the Athonite Academy, who was posthumously condemned in 1793 by the Patriarchate of Constantinople for the philosophical views expressed in a pamphlet entitled *Of theocracy*, published earlier that year at Leipzig. This was the most radical source of religious criticism in Greek Enlightenment literature as a whole and was inspired by Spinozist ideas. Although Spinoza's name is nowhere mentioned in the text, the pamphlet is an outstanding example of the subterranean circulation of the ideas of the radical Enlightenment in European culture in the eighteenth century (Kitromilides, 2013: 251–3). Subsequently, the attitude of the Orthodox Church towards secular learning and liberal ideas hardened considerably, especially during the three patriarchates of Gregory V (1797–8, 1806–8, 1818–21) (Kitromilides, 2013: 291–315).

The eventual retraction of the Church from its former conditional openness to the Enlightenment, and the active campaign against modern ideas during the three decades between the French and the Greek Revolutions (1789–1821), has coloured retrospectively the interpretation of a much more complex and nuanced attitude. Nevertheless, awareness that the Enlightenment heritage and modern learning could be useful to the Church's pastoral and educational work remained a viable option, one which was exercised even in the period of ideological conflict between the official Church and the Enlightenment. This transpired on the occasion of yet one more initiative of reform of the Patriarchal Academy in the early nineteenth century, when the school was moved to the suburb of Kuruçesme on the Bosphorus and opened up once again to the scholars of the Enlightenment during the patriarchates of Kallinikos V (1801–6; 1808–9) and Cyril VI (1813–8) (Kitromilides, 2019: 12–24).

## The Protestant denominations

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Of all the Christian traditions in early modern Europe, the various branches of the Reformed churches or communities were most readily open and susceptible to the ideas of the Enlightenment. This does not mean of course that there had been no reservations or concerns on the minds of Protestant ecclesiastical leaders or scholars vis-à-vis the Enlightenment's more radical tendencies and positions in questions of religion, but the interface of revelation and natural religion in the Protestant world was generally handled with greater maturity and discernment than in other Christian environments. This was to some extent due to the fact that the encounter of Protestant Christianity with the Enlightenment was carried out on a truly remarkable philosophical basis, elaborated by the contributions of leading thinkers such as John Locke and Pierre Bayle on the question of toleration and on the possibilities of reconciling reason or 'reasonableness' with revelation and Christian faith (Zurbuchen, 2006).

A specific spiritual movement within Lutheranism which prepared the ground for openings to the Enlightenment was Pietism, initiated by Philipp Jakob Spener (1635–1705) and appealing to a revival of the faith and ecclesiastical life through personal piety and spiritual exertion against dogmatic ossification, which was perceived to have dominated the heritage of the Reformation. Pietism by no means adopted rationalism, but the critique of Protestant orthodoxy opened the way for a new understanding of religious knowledge. This was the background to the important synthesis of Christian rationalism which emanated from German Protestant universities and reached its mature expression in the work of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716), Christian Thomasius (1655–1728), and Christian Wolff (1679–1754). Their effort to reconcile reason with revelation and to show that Christianity was not incompatible with modern scientific knowledge laid the foundations for a religious Enlightenment, which is now recognized as an important constituent of the broader movement of intellectual change in European culture.

The philosophy of Christian rationalism had two important consequences for Lutheranism. First it made possible the emergence of an Enlightened theology, whose philosophical foundation was Wolffianism and was articulated as a distinct form of Protestant *Aufklärung* under the name of 'Neologism'. The Neologists introduced historical criticism in the study of the Bible, stressed the moral teaching of Christ rather than doctrinal issues and shared with the secular Enlightenment a strong commitment to toleration (Gerrish, 2006). The second consequence of Christian philosophical rationalism was connected with its general respect for and acceptance of the established Lutheran Church. This attitude enabled in turn Lutheran pastors to engage actively in Enlightenment-inspired projects of social reform and improvement. In Frederick the Great's Prussia these were mostly state-sponsored projects and the involvement of pastors in them confirmed the Protestant model of the integration of ecclesiastical institutions into the overall state administration. Later critics have connected this joining of church and state with the cultivation of conformist traditions in German society that contributed to the politics of cultural despair and the eventual German catastrophe in the first part of the twentieth century.

Anglicanism entered the Age of Enlightenment at a time when it was trying to overcome the bitter experience of religious strife and civil war in the previous century. That experience provided a strong motivation in favour of toleration and of the reduction of scriptural interpretation to moral teaching, rather than doctrinal disputes. In this case, too, the quest for a rational Christianity became a primary trend in both religious thought and ecclesiastical practice. The philosophical and theological foundation was provided by John Locke with his courageous defence of toleration and his claim that Christianity was 'reasonable': in other words, that it could be understood to conform to the requirements of human reason. This was a daring claim that did not go unchallenged, but it nevertheless set the terms of debate on religion's relation to reason and politics.

English religious thought was dominated by the debate over natural versus revealed religion. The origins of the debate went back to the period of the 'crisis of European conscience' and to the substantive philosophical issues raised by the emergence of deism as an aspect of the Enlightenment. The early arguments on natural religion put forward by Anthony Collins (1676–1729) and John Toland (1670–1722) were further explored by Matthew Tindal (1657–1733) and Samuel Clarke (1675–1729), who nevertheless criticized the deists and invited them to accept revelation. To the rising current of rationalism and deism the main philosophical response came from two bishops of the Anglican Church, George Berkeley (1685–1753) and Joseph Butler (1692–1752), both of whom pointed to the limits of reason and its powers. The terms of the debate on religion and reason, however, were eventually reshaped not by intra-Anglican controversies but by a new and powerful—not least in its own self-doubt—current of scepticism emanating from Scotland. This was the contribution of David Hume (1711–76), whose famous essay on miracles, the *Natural History of Religion* and his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* subjected religious belief to searching analysis but avoided either a categorical deist or an atheist position (Stewart, 2006).

The consequences of these intellectual attitudes and debates for the Church of England involved on the one hand a reorientation towards a practical understanding of faith and religious practice, and on the other the adoption of a broad pastoral and theological attitude, known as latitudinarianism—that is a liberal and tolerant interpretation of the faith. Over the years this approach exposed Anglicanism to the criticism of more spiritually inclined groups whose members sought a more substantial religious experience. Such groups in England represented a parallel to the German Pietists and they included the Baptists, the Quakers, and eventually the Methodists of John Wesley (1703–91), who brought about an evangelical revival with important appeal in the New World as well. Thus, it appeared that Enlightenment culture and the embrace of the principle of toleration made possible a religious pluralism that in many respects went beyond the requirements of reason (Plumb, 1963: 42–5, 91–7).

The Enlightenment had an important impact on other branches of Protestantism as well. Genevan Calvinism had since 1675 been under the strict religious regime of *Formula Consensus*, which was a firm doctrinal statement, stressing human depravity and hopeless corruption. The rigours of this approach made Calvinist orthodoxy sound increasingly irrelevant at a time of Enlightenment. The recognition of this condition led to a serious rethinking of the prospects of Calvinism in a changing Europe and motivated a quest for the reformulation of the 'pure doctrine of Christ'. The task was discharged by Jean-Alphonse Turretini (1671–1737), a Genevan pastor who argued that Christ's teaching could not contradict reason, but it surpassed it at certain points of belief. Under his guidance the Calvinist doctrines of predestination and original sin were toned down and the moral aspects of Christianity were given greater prominence. The *Formula Consensus* was eventually abandoned, Calvinist liturgical books were revised, and the reasonableness of Christianity increasingly stressed (Pitassi, 1992). Thus, a new Calvinism was produced under the impact of the Enlightenment, which among many other sources found expression in the 'profession de foi du vicaire Savoyard', which Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78) included in *Emile* as part of the training of an enlightened moral personality.

## The Enlightenment and religion in European thought

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The Enlightenment was associated with a multiplicity of positions on the question of religion: from atheism and scepticism, through deism and ‘natural religion’, to a commitment to a ‘religious Enlightenment’ that preserved the fundamentals of the faith without rejecting the intellectual conquests of the new culture of rationalism. The appropriate conclusion of this chapter should, then, be a brief look at the intellectual and moral significance of ‘religious Enlightenment’. The term itself is a neologism, a declaration in fact of a new understanding of the complexity of the Enlightenment itself. Specifically, the recognition of a religious Enlightenment—that is of an understanding of religious issues through the lens of the Enlightenment—suggests that beyond the radical and moderate versions of the Enlightenment a religious component exists, completing the cultural spectrum of Europe in the age of reason.

p. 132 The religious Enlightenment essentially meant that faith should be tempered through a dialogue with knowledge and reason in order to avoid the excesses of dissension, intolerance, dogmatism, and irrational enthusiasm. The movement, nevertheless, stayed within the bounds set by doctrine, respected the authority of organized religion and its institutions, and distrusted the possibility of unfettered reason to engender morality. The ideal of religious Enlightenment was a balance between reason ↴ and faith, a balance which meant the incorporation of natural religion into the broader framework of revealed religion. The synthesis of reason and revelation was expected to provide a safe foundation to true belief and morality. The proponents of the religious Enlightenment stayed clear of radical alternatives in questions of church and state and the public role of religion. They acted as defenders of the faith against unbelievers, deists, and detractors of religion and the Church. They did not advocate the separation of church and state but expected the state to promote moderate reform in the service of religious Enlightenment, toleration, education, and the moral cultivation of the faithful. Through such means and the appeal to the values of natural law they also hoped that established religion might be regenerated and reformed, without compromising its defining doctrines.

The canon of the religious Enlightenment has been recently established by David Sorkin in an important work that discusses the cases of representative thinkers from three traditions, Roman Catholicism, Protestantism in its Anglican, Lutheran and Calvinist branches, and Judaism. The thinkers discussed are William Warburton (1698–1779), Jacob Vernet (1698–1789), Siegmund Jakob Baumgarten (1706–57), Joseph Valentin Eybel (1741–1805), Antoine-Adrien Lamourette (1742–94), and Moses Mendelssohn (1729–86) (Sorkin, 2008). The prosopographical purview of the religious Enlightenment could be significantly extended by adding to the canon first and foremost the two Italian pioneers already mentioned in this chapter, the Modenese Lodovico Antonio Muratori (1672–1750) and the Neapolitan Antonio Genovesi. Muratori was a great master of historical scholarship and paleography and thought that historical criticism of the Scripture could both purify and strengthen the faith. In his judgement what was needed for the improvement of the Roman Catholic faith was the moral education of society and he produced a treatise of moral philosophy which proved of great significance for the propagation of the ideas of the religious Enlightenment not only in the Roman Catholic world but in the broader European periphery through its Greek translation by Iosipos Moisiodax (1725–1800) in 1761, from which a further Romanian translation was produced by Vasile Vârnav (d. 1827). Muratori clearly suggests that through moral re-education the faithful could be liberated from ‘excessive devotion’ and reach the ideal of a ‘Happy Christianity’, which he projects in one of his best-known works (Venturi, 1969: 138–86; Rosa and Al Kalak, 2018).

Antonio Genovesi also contributed decisively to the religious Enlightenment first by elaborating in his early writings an imposing and inclusive system of metaphysics, which provided a philosophical foundation for the coexistence of reason and revelation, scientific knowledge and faith, in a logically coherent arrangement of the subject matter of metaphysics. Genovesi of course did not stop at this early synthesis but proceeded in later works to the development of a concept of the utility of religion in nurturing civil society (Pii, 1984:

131–63). Such ideas made his work attractive in other cultural environments in which the religious Enlightenment was in fact clearing the ground for modern philosophy and science to take root. A case in point is the extensive use and eventual Greek translation of Genovesi's *Elements of metaphysics* by Evgenios Voulgaris as a textbook in his own Enlightenment project.

p. 133 A further extension of the religious Enlightenment would draw into the gallery two of the greatest scholars of the Orthodox tradition in the eighteenth century, Evgenios Voulgaris, whom we have encountered repeatedly in this survey, and Platon Levshin. The two Orthodox prelates represent the essence of the religious Enlightenment, replete with all the tensions that inevitably arise from a truly valiant effort to bring together natural reason and natural law with the resources of the Orthodox tradition in the hope of nurturing a morally re-educated new society. The characterization of Metropolitan Platon as 'more *philosophe* than priest' by Joseph II could also be applied to Voulgaris as translator of Voltaire and a proponent of toleration, but it would be misleading to view these exponents of Orthodox Enlightenment exclusively in these terms. Their openness to the Enlightenment was combined with a deep consciousness of the significance of the Orthodox heritage as the repository of truth, which they felt could be enhanced and safeguarded through the intellectual and moral resources of modernity (Carras, 2016).

The two Orthodox prelates were the closest parallel that could be identified to the case of the most famous representative of religious Enlightenment in European culture: Moses Mendelssohn (Brunschwig, 1974: 256–66). The 'Socrates of Berlin', as he was known on account of his German paraphrase of Plato's *Phaido*, was of course an intellectual presence on a much grander scale than the two Orthodox scholars. His writings were imposing contributions to the mainstream of Enlightenment thought. The two Orthodox scholars shared with him the Wolffian substratum of reflection on philosophical and religious questions and especially the attitude of arguing the case for the Enlightenment from within the religious tradition to which they belonged and which they tried to serve by renewing and enhancing it. Mendelssohn and the *Haskalah*, the Jewish Enlightenment, in which he was the foremost protagonist, was at many levels Judaism's response to Spinoza (1632–77), suggesting that there were other ways and possibilities immanent in the Jewish spiritual tradition to handle questions of faith, knowledge, and criticism than radical doubt and rejection. Mendelssohn's recognition in the German Enlightenment by thinkers like Lessing and others was also an indication that the emancipation of the Jewish population of Europe could be pursued effectively by renewing rather than rejecting a venerable religious heritage. Mendelssohn led the religious Enlightenment as far as it could reach. In short the inner tensions and limits of the *Haskalah* put in sharper relief the challenges with which the religious Enlightenment had to cope in its intellectual and moral strivings (Sorkin, 2008: 167–213).

## Conclusion

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p. 134 This chapter has suggested that the progress of research in intellectual history associated with an extensive reappraisal of the significance of religion in cultural change, has made possible a new, more nuanced and inclusive understanding of the relationship between Enlightenment and religion in European history. The revisionist effect can be further sustained by a geographically expanded perspective on the Enlightenment's  
interplay ↪ with religious traditions that has drawn Eastern and South-Eastern Europe into critical reflection on the subject. On the basis of the broadened evidence of source material and of the case studies examined in this chapter it can be argued: (a) that in the Roman Catholic world there was considerably more receptivity and willingness to converse with Enlightenment ideas by at least one supreme pontiff, Benedict XIV, and by a number of important scholars and intellectuals who remained firmly within the faith but also recognized the value of reason in social and religious thought; (b) that even a summary of the historical record makes it clear that the relationship and interaction between Orthodoxy and Enlightenment was marked by affinity, osmosis, and coexistence to a much greater degree than the often uninformed 'Whig interpretation' of pertinent intellectual phenomena has tended to suggest; and (c) that the Protestant denominations showed a remarkable openness to reflection on ideas of natural religion and reasonableness, an openness that made possible a creative conversation on the value of religion and its social mission and the meaning of personal spirituality. The new understanding of the Enlightenment and religion nexus can also project a more inclusive concept of European civilization and its multiple intellectual legacies.

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CHAPTER

## 8 Religion and Revolution in Europe

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### Abstract

The French Revolution and Napoleonic Empire altered the religious landscape of France, Europe, and the wider world. Revolutionaries reduced religion to a matter of opinion in the 10th Article of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789), legitimizing their seizure of Catholic lands and disavowal of the religious and political hierarchy of Old Regime France and its empire in the process. This in turn ignited a dechristianization campaign, local conflicts between Catholics, Protestants, and Jewish communities, and counter-revolutionary war in France. The violence reverberated well beyond France's borders, both throughout Europe and in imperial and non-imperial spaces. From Prussia to Portugal to Port-au-Prince, revolutionaries inspired violence against and in defence of religion, drove *les religieux* across borders and into the borderlands, and sparked debates over secularization (laïcization, in France) and the rights of individuals and collective, religious bodies for generations.

**Keywords:** French Revolution, Napoleonic Empire, Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, dechristianization, secularization, laïcization

**Subject:** History of Religion, Religion

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THE French Revolution marked a point of schism in the religious history of Europe. It unsettled the power of the papacy in much of Europe, overthrew the system of sacral absolutism used by monarchs in Europe to secure their claim to power, disrupted the lives of millions of practising religious individuals, and freed hundreds of thousands of religious minorities who had long found their abilities to practise their faiths hindered. Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) noted that the French Revolution was ‘world-historical’, because it affected peoples far beyond France’s borders (Hegel, 1956: 285). For the dominant Christian population in Europe, the revolutionary age was *otherworld*-historical as well—that is the revolutionary turmoil had a direct impact on the lives of believers and their communities, in sacred and profane terms. At its core, the French Revolution exacerbated tensions between individual and collective rights and privileges, especially the corporate privileges of the Catholic Church. This chapter focuses on how this dialectical struggle emerged in Europe and spread throughout the rest of the world.

## Religious origins of revolution in Europe

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p. 138 Historians of religion and pre-revolutionary France debate how religion should be presented in the context of the looming revolutionary rupture. Was the eighteenth century a golden age of Gallicanism as John McManners, an Oxford historian of French religious history, argued implicitly, noting that the French Revolution's more caustic religious politics did not reflect the nominally faithful character of the country? Was the Marxist historian of the French Revolution Michel Vovelle correct in depicting the eighteenth century as on the march towards disenchantment, which made the Revolution's attacks on the Catholic Church possible (Vovelle, 1997; McManners, 1998)? Or, in a third sense, was there something radical brewing *within* rather than *in opposition to* French religious communities that made the French Revolution possible, as the historian of eighteenth-century Jansenism Dale Van Kley has argued (Van Kley, 1999)? In yet another sense, did the radical efforts to dechristianize France represent a drastic break from a period best characterized by belief in eschatological orthodoxy, or should we view such efforts as an extension of a fundamental reformist tendency within the eighteenth-century Catholic Church? Any efforts to synthesize the religious history of pre-revolutionary France would find evidence for each of these interpretations, depending on the individual, group, and region.

The Roman Catholic Church dominated the French kingdom for centuries. Around 500,000 Calvinists lived in the country after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 (Tackett, 2006: 537). They occupied rural spaces in the Massif-Central and south along the Mediterranean. Even as the state adopted a de facto policy of toleration by the 1760s, many Calvinists refused to play too public a role in their respective towns until 1787 when Louis XVI (r. 1774–92) signed the so-called Edict of Toleration that bestowed basic rights as subjects on *non-Catholiques*. Lutherans, by virtue of the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, enjoyed more open toleration and occupied the eastern French border—Strasbourg, in particular. Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews lived in various urban communities throughout the kingdom, but none of these religious minorities posed much of a threat to the Catholic Church (Aston, 2000). There were around 28 million French people baptized by the Catholic Church in 1789, and in that same year, the Catholic Church owned a significant portion of the country itself. Churches, monasteries, convents, hospitals, and schools dotted every single corner of France, reinforcing the Church's dominance over the spiritual as well as the day-to-day lives of their parishioners (Tackett, 2006). Literate individuals bought copies of the Bible, devotional works, and other canonical works at a rate similar if not greater to those purchasing political, polemical, and sometimes satirical works of the Enlightenment. Catholic holidays marked time for most Frenchmen in the eighteenth century, and even after the French Revolution broke out and the dechristianization campaign commenced, many individuals complained about the elimination of such religious and essentially social occasions (Shusterman, 2010: 225). While the Calvinist Reformation and the resulting Wars of Religion had presented a serious challenge to the Catholic Church and their claims to the social calendar of many Frenchmen, the Church continued to order most people's days in France and still exercised the ability to tithe, charge sacramental fees, and collect seigneurial dues. These sources of income meant many members of the clerical order lived impressive lives with formidable, landed wealth. To follow McManners' argument, if a Catholic Reformation took place in the early modern period, it would be safe to say it reached its apogee during the eighteenth century. In political terms, the Catholic Church continued to uphold earlier understandings of sacral absolutism, blessing and crowning each kingly succession and holding prominent political positions within the Gallican government. Bishops held ministerial positions and a General Assembly of the Clergy strictly regulated gifts to the monarch as well as the privileges the Church sought to maintain for itself—namely their tax exemptions.

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It was this model that attracted James II of England (r. 1685–8) at the end of the seventeenth century. As Steven Pincus has argued, the English Revolution in many respects was not simply the reaction to a Catholic sovereign, but to a French Catholic mode of governance. King Louis XIV the Great (the Sun King) (r. 1643–

1715), James II's cousin, established the Gallican Articles in 1682, which theoretically established a French branch of the Catholic Church over which the king could exercise greater authority untethered by the Holy See. When James II came to power, he too, sought to fashion a Catholic polity like his cousin's. He sponsored Catholic apologetic literature and had Catholic schools and colleges built alongside churches. Anyone living through the 1680s in England would have felt the decisive shift in the religious political sphere, and it was this shift that promoted the popular revolution against James II along with the revolt of Parliament and the Anglican establishment, who increasingly looked towards the Dutch Republic for political inspiration (Pincus, 2009).

Cracks in the French Catholic Church and challenges to Catholic belief came in a myriad of ways. It would seem outside forces eroded the faith of some Frenchmen. Historians like Vovelle have pointed to the 'secularization' of wills, which after the 1750s left less money to church charities and requiem masses. Similarly, elite families, who could afford libraries, registered fewer religious tracts and showed preference for vogueish, would-be secular tracts of the Enlightenment. These material shifts in elite circles were accompanied by an upsurge in masonic lodges, which were notorious for sponsoring anticlerical and deist sentiments, as well as a veritable commercial revolution which attracted the material resources of the wealthy away from more traditional, religious donations. Members of the Catholic counter-Enlightenment, like the Jesuit conspiracy theorist, Abbé Augustin Barruel (1741–1820) imagined a cabal of non-believers working tirelessly to undermine the Catholic Church (McMahon, 2002). Many of those of the nineteenth-century liberal tradition tended to lean towards the privatization thesis, while Marxist scholars have emphasized the materialist component (Merrick, 1990; Vovelle, 1997).

It is also likely that much of this transition occurred because of conflict within the Church. Intra-Catholic turmoil erupted in the eighteenth century in two primary ways. First, a kind of class war emerged between the lower *curés* and the upper-level clerics. Many of the *curés* saw themselves as in the mire of the populace, toiling endlessly to save souls and provide for their parishioners, while the upper orders, some of whom sat over parishes in absentia, while still collecting the tithe and other fees. This perceived corruption struck many as a fundamental issue stultifying the Church's work. Second, the entrenched struggle between Jesuits and Jansenists inspired much of the anticlerical spirit of the age. The Jesuits, or Society of Jesus, and Louis XIV pushed the papacy to issue the bull of *Unigenitus* in 1713 that condemned many of the principles of the Jansenists. Later, the papacy formally suppressed the Jesuits in France in the mid-1760s at the behest of several Jansenists supported by the Gallican *parlements*. Since the Society of Jesus ran many of the schools in France, the suppression of the order set off a chain of educational changes, which may have disrupted Catholic pedagogical continuity and led to fluctuations in faith.

In many ways, trying to assess the faith of the French populace during the Old Regime is teleologically coloured by the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror (1793–4). But it is important to recognize that many of the anticlerical shifts of the revolutionary period were at least in part acts driven by contingency rather than *longue durée* secular shifts. It is possible, à la Alexis de Tocqueville that many of the religious policies of the Old Regime would have continued to crumble at a slow pace, unveiling greater religious toleration and stripping back the political, social, and economic importance of the Catholic Church. Perhaps, intra-Catholic controversy sparked disenchantment, and new enlightened ideas decoupled church and state, which made it conceivable to strip the Church of its powers during the Revolution and to undermine the monarchy's claim to absolute control in the realm. Or perhaps, to return to McManners, the eighteenth century could have remained a Catholic golden age. To approach 1789 and the Revolution that ensued, it is necessary to take into account both the long religious history of France as well as the very real circumstances the revolutionaries faced.

## The French Revolution and the paradox of religious toleration

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Was dechristianization inevitable in 1789? This question has been carried by historiographical tides from the Marxists to the Revisionists and Post-Revisionists. While there is not enough space here to treat this question or even the historiography at length, it is worth noting that the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* (Déclaration, 1789) contained problematic language when it came to religion and the place of religious communities in France. The 10th Article of the *Declaration* states: 'No one shall be disturbed for their opinions, even in religion, provided their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by law' (Déclaration, 1789). In that phrase alone, the revolutionaries challenged the entire pre-revolutionary French Catholic political model. They reduced religion to a matter of opinion, and that opinion was subjugated to the law rather than being its defining feature. Yet this shift in the politics of religion was the by-product of the summer of 1789. When the deputies of the Estates General first arrived in May 1789, few would have envisioned the types of changes the summer would bring. Strong anticlerical sentiments existed, primarily in the Third Estate, but members from all political backgrounds recognized how religion offered social security, social cohesion, and could promote stability during a period dominated by grain shortages and the financial perils faced by the state. The stage was set for the Revolution's radical upheaval of the Catholic Church by 4 August 1789. As Michael Fitzsimmons has shown, a wave of exuberance brought on by fear, anxiety, and perhaps ↴ pressures of group psychology, drove a near-wholesale repudiation of the Old Regime's feudal system, which included the Church's seigniorial claims as well as their right to tithe (Fitzsimmons, 2003). Only a couple of days later, the Church's properties in France came under attack, but most asserted such a measure would be too hasty. Later, in November, many of the moderates and radicals in the National Assembly argued the confiscation and sale of these properties could divert the coming fiscal disaster. The nationalization of church lands set the stage for the radical statement in the 10th Article of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*. By making religion a matter of opinion, the revolutionaries stripped the Catholic Church of its ability to claim privileges and be above the law.

Whether stripping the Catholic Church's lands can be read as an extension of the 10th Article, rather than a response to the situation that the revolutionaries faced, is debatable. What can be said is that a fundamental paradox for many in the Catholic Church can be found in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*. Religious liberty stood at odds with social equality. Attacks against the more unpopular branches and powers of the Catholic Church continued as previously marginalized religious communities were liberated and given unprecedented rights as citizens. In August 1789, the subject of outright religious liberty was contested, especially among the more conservative members. For many, the inclusion of the phrase, 'even in religion', was an empty attempt at compromise. Jean-Paul Rabaut Saint-Étienne, the Protestant Pastor and later President (1743–93), called for full equality as religious toleration simultaneously propped up a paternalistic religious authority just as it granted rights to minority *cultes*. On Christmas Eve 1789, the Assembly granted full civil rights to Protestants. Even those who opposed Protestant equality with Catholicism found such a move favourable, defining Catholics and Protestants as both Christians (which was a radical statement in eighteenth-century France), rather than grant the Jewish population equal consideration. Sephardi Jews received similar rights one month later, but the Ashkenazim—who bore the brunt of French cultural anti-Semitism and were often tarnished as clannish and incapable of assimilating Frenchness—only gained political rights in September 1791.

Liberation of religious minorities combined with several failed attempts to proclaim Catholicism the 'state religion' in France and the National Assembly's attempts to reorganize the Catholic clergy created a storm of instability. The Assembly adopted the Civil Constitution of the Clergy on 12 July 1790 as an attempt to weather this storm and bring calm to the revolutionary tumult. It was also the by-product of Jansenist reformism, as Van Kley has shown (Van Kley, 1999). The Civil Constitution simplified the structure of the Gallican Church, from 135 dioceses to 83, many positions in the Church were eliminated, and all future

bishop and priestly positions were to be elected by the laity. The papacy was cut out of this process entirely — arguably one of the central reasons why Pope Pius VI (1775–99), condemned the Revolution in February 1791. Following the king's decision to sanction the oath to the Civil Constitution, a schism emerged in the Church. Those who took the oath precisely as it was mandated by the revolutionaries joined the

p. 142 Constitutional Church. While a vast majority was willing to swear some form of the oath, those who did not take the oath verbatim were forced to leave their posts. These refractory priests, in regions like the Franche-Comté, Roussillon, and those provinces along the northern frontiers, maintained connections to the papacy, most likely a remnant of their long years of occupation by the Spanish Habsburgs. Non-juring priests sought refuge with powerful, counter-revolutionary aristocrats, or in rural, ultra-Catholic spaces where the frontiers acted as their fortresses against the Revolution. It was from these spaces that the counter-revolutionary insurrections began. In August 1792, all non-juring priests under the age of sixty were ordered to leave France. Those over sixty or disabled were ordered into detention centres. Approximately 3,000 priests were killed by the revolutionary political machine, most of whom were refractory priests. Violence against religious communities in general and the Catholic Church in particular escalated further following the start of the French Revolutionary War with Prussia and Austria. Following the regicide, Catholics joined large popular insurrectionary forces in Brittany, Maine, Normandy, and most notably the Vendée region, which was the hottest bed of ultra-Catholic counter-revolutionary fervour (Tackett, 2006: 536–55).

Dechristianization commenced by the autumn of 1793 and ran its course by the summer of 1794. What that dechristianization really looked like and if it amounted to a systematic policy has been debated ever since. In the midst of the Reign of Terror, leaders of the Convention and Committee of Public Safety openly called for the further dissolution of the Christian Church, the destruction of religious iconography, the creation of a Republican calendar free from the Christian symbolism of the past, and outright violence against all members of the cloth who dared defy revolutionary orders. Church bells were melted down for cannon and ammunition. The names of public spaces, whole towns, and street names were completely rewritten to erase any allusion to Biblical or saintly figures. Many of the urban working class saw dechristianization as an opportunity to reap material rewards and lift the veil of superstition from *le peuple*. Many revolutionaries promoted atheist policies, deist programmes, or devised brand new civil religions like Theophilanthropy—a civil religion with charity at its core that received support from the post-Terror government, known as the Directory. Maximilien Robespierre (1758–94) mobilized the cult of the Supreme Being. Its pinnacle was the Festival of the Supreme Being, held on 20 Prairial, Year II of the Republican Calendar (8 June 1794) (Smyth, 2016). Yet, following the Revolution's turn against Robespierre with the Thermidorian Reaction, dechristianization also ended in France.

p. 143 When did the French Revolution end in religious terms? The French Revolution was a by-product of a religious Old Regime fraught with religious division—from within the Catholic hierarchy and between Gallicans, Jesuits, and Jansenists, and its trajectory was equally influenced by division within the French Catholic fold—between juring and non-juring priests, from the laity all the way to the papacy. For some, a convenient date to conclude is with the Thermidorian Reaction. Such accounts would colour the Directory period (1794–9) to follow as stagnant and free from religious turmoil, change, and political importance. Yet the years of the Directory witnessed a slow revival of faith, often mixed with the remnants of the religious republicanism promoted by the Terror. The very real trauma of the Terror left the religious situation of France uneasy. Religious insurrections continued despite the Directory's efforts to quell such advances. In 1795, the Convention sought to laicize France—that is, to separate church from state entirely. The government would no longer fund any religion. Citizens could reopen churches and priests that swore a new oath of loyalty could head those churches. In spaces where no priest could be found, lay Catholics found ways to reinvent Catholic practice. Fathers tended to the religious lives of their families as priests once had. Children learned catechisms and recited the rosary in their respective homes. Just as persecuted Calvinists had before the Revolution, Catholics sought out cleared forests and barns to practise their faith. Those who

sought out such revivals often found the promises of the Revolution's republican faiths to be empty and void of community, but they nonetheless harnessed the rhetoric of republicanism and revolution to articulate their desire to rechristianize France. Catholic parishioners petitioned their local representatives and bureaucrats to allow them to return to church spaces, rebuild those that had been torn asunder, reclaim church bells from the smelt yard, and release their priests who sat in detention centres and dungeons. They argued that their religious rights came from the Rousseauian principle of the 'General Will'—a rhetorical mainstay of the Revolution—as well as the guarantees of religious liberty that the Constitution of the Republic granted them (Desan, 1990).

If in the Directory, one still finds the Revolution's rhetoric blended with religious practice and expression and the government attempting to regulate its relationship with the Church, so it might make more sense to define the concluding point of the Revolution later. Perhaps, Napoleon's Concordat with the pope in 1801 marks a better end point, where the papacy and the French state made amends, encouraging many renegade refractory priests to return to their parishes. If religious equality is the benchmark, then perhaps 1802 works better—when the Bonaparte and the Consulate granted Protestant rights with the Organic Articles—or even later to 1806–7, when Emperor Napoleon I convened the Grand Sanhedrin and recognized Jews in the country. Did Napoleon end the Revolution or were his policies of religious toleration indicative of the driving forces behind the 10th Article of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*? He certainly would have preferred the second interpretation when he rather pragmatically noted: 'By turning Catholic I ended the War of the Vendée, by becoming a Moslem established myself in Egypt ... If I governed a people of Jews, I would rebuild the temple of Solomon' (quoted in Lyons, 1994: 83).

Recognizing any of these years as indicative of the Revolution's conclusion fails to acknowledge the tremors the Revolution caused across Europe and the Atlantic World. Such reverberations were not solely ideological—which was significant—but were also material. People carried the Revolution abroad and the Revolution expelled people abroad. These people bore witness to the otherworld-historical importance of the French Revolution.

## Reverberations across Europe

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One of the central debates of the French Revolution's religious legacy is the extent to which the Revolution disrupted policies of religious toleration across Europe. Did the Revolution liberate the religiously oppressed? Or did French expansionism upend previous efforts to institute religious tolerance and reignite age-old confessional antagonisms? Peoples throughout Europe had varied responses to the French Revolution's impact on religion. Some only heard about the policies and events in France through the press, priestly sermons, or in public spaces, where rumour dominated public discourse. After the abolishment of feudalism and the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, religious émigrés left France for neighbouring countries, spreading news of the Revolution and their counter-revolutionary politics in places as far west as Lisbon and as far east as Warsaw, St Petersburg, Budapest, and Athens. As Robert R. Palmer noted, 'a Russian found that the "charm of revolution" had penetrated "deep into Siberia"' (Palmer, 2016: 7).

The neighbouring Bourbon kingdom of Spain came under Charles IV's (Carlos) (r. 1788–1808) control in 1788, less than a year before the French Revolution began. Also experiencing tenuous financial circumstances and unrest at home, the king and his Chief Minister, José Moñino y Redondo, Count de Floridablanca, aggressively sought to control information related to the French Revolution coming into Spain. This was particularly difficult as émigrés and refractory priests arrived from France in late 1792. While Spanish citizens welcomed priests from France, the Crown forbade them from teaching, restricted them to certain locations, and required them to take an oath not to discuss the French Revolution. In turn, Spanish Catholic priests used the pulpit to encourage citizens to go to war with France after the regicide of



Louis XVI in 1793. Claiming that the Protestant Reformation, the Enlightenment, and Jansenists brought about the French Revolution, the Chief Minister also resuscitated the Inquisition (Herr, 1958: 243–6). Along with their ultra-traditionalist supporters, Charles IV and Floridablanca embraced ‘the trilogy of Religion–Fatherland–King’ to counter French revolutionary ideas (Aymes, 1992: 83). After Napoleon Bonaparte’s forces invaded Spain in 1808, Spaniards ‘employed the imagery of Crusade’ in fighting against the French armies, ‘comparing it to the medieval struggle for the liberation of Christian Spain from the Moors’. When French troops killed Catholic clergy, they became martyrs for the Spanish people (Callahan, 1984: 85–7; Brown, 2006: 589).

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Prior to the Peninsular War in 1808, Portugal had far less direct contact with the French Revolution than most other European kingdoms. The Portuguese possessed a long-held Francophobia, considering them ‘godless’ and ‘irreligious’. Sensationalized stories from France and about émigrés in Portugal during the revolution only added to the negative perceptions. Although Portugal only received about 500 émigrés throughout the 1790s, Portuguese authorities found them to be highly suspect. In particular, they assumed French priests to be Jansenists and were ‘possessed by the evil they ↵ called “Philosophie”’ that led to the French Revolution (Higgs, 1999: 85–7). Because of this, the Portuguese set aside their disdain for the British to join the first anti-French coalition, but this did not prevent the later Napoleonic invasion and subsequent flight of the Portuguese royal court to Brazil.

Whereas the Iberian kingdoms of Spain and Portugal sought to silence the French Revolution within its borders, the Italian states demonstrated a more mixed reaction. The significance of the influence of the French Revolution on the eventual Italian unification, the *Risorgimento*, has been the centre of historiographical debate (Di Scala, 2004: 21–35). Intellectuals in many of the Italian states received the revolution remarkably well. Elite Italians had seen Enlightenment ideas almost as a continuation of humanism; in turn, Italians enjoyed a robust public sphere. Raymond Grew claims this is why ‘a case can be made that no European society outside France more readily accepted, or was more permanently affected by, the French Revolution and Napoleon’ (Grew, 1999: 408). Of course, not all Italian states embraced France’s revolutionary ideas. This reason is clear: although Italy did not unify until the late nineteenth century, most Italians found cultural cohesion through Christianity. In the Papal States, this meant some opposition to the French Revolution. As in Spain, French refractory clergy were met with some suspicion in the Papal States, as it was thought that they might carry democratic ideas, and, therefore, separated into various religious houses (Picheloup, 1972; Broers, 2002). The Italian states joined the First Coalition in 1792 in fighting against France in the Revolutionary Wars. That said, most Italians encountered the French Revolution rather later than the Spanish, with the military campaigns in the northern Italian territories under Bonaparte in 1796 that established the Cisalpine Republic. Two years later, France invaded the Papal States, forcing Pope Pius VI into exile, and established the Roman Republic (Hanson, 2015: 165, 252).

In the years before the French Revolution, Catholics in England practised clandestinely. Just as émigrés began to arrive in England, Parliament passed the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1791, granting them the right to practise without penalty. However, English Catholics remained uneasy about what they perceived as excessive religious displays in public, like those of French Catholics. Some émigrés fled France for non-Catholic countries during the revolution, placing geographic access and financial concerns as higher priorities than religion. Thus, thousands of French émigrés went to England, including numerous Catholic clergy. As the numbers grew, the British put forth the 1793 Aliens Act, requiring them all to obtain a passport, surrender any firearms, and remain in designated areas. British charitable organizations and the government provided relief for the French in England, but they divided the responsibilities between separate committees for the laity and the clergy. In total, nearly 5,000 French Catholic clergy in England received relief. Kirsty Carpenter explains that ‘two quite separate Catholic cultures emerged’, the British, ‘the one native and introverted, barely tolerated by the government, and the other foreign and French–



centred, pensioned by the state' (Carpenter, 2017: 76–85). Yet, she also claims that 'in a rather odd way' the French Revolution encouraged friendship between England and France.

p. 146 Catholics were not the only British Christians to respond to the French Revolution. Initially, Protestants in Britain perceived the rights extended by the French Revolution to French Protestants positively. However, with time, the combination of growing political tensions in Europe, French émigrés entering England, and the displacement caused by industrialization brought about a 'revival movement' among English Protestants; they sought refuge and comfort in their own religion. According to Stewart Brown, England experienced a 'new religious zeal among Protestant Dissenters, especially Wesleyan Methodists'. Tens of thousands of people converted and thousands of new congregations emerged from 1791 to 1800. This also extended to Scottish and Irish Protestant congregations, and it connected with the Second Great Awakening in the United States (Brown, 2006: 576–8).

When the Society of United Irishmen planned an uprising against the British in the late 1790s, they sought help from the French. Inspired by the French Revolution, they strove to unite Presbyterians and Catholics into a single parliament and remove British rule. However, as the British went to war with France in 1793, they saw the United Irishmen as a threat. While the British officially suppressed the society in 1794, its members continued to organize underground, continuing to plan for an independent Irish republic. Irish leader, Theobald Wolfe Tone (1763–98) travelled to France to seek help, and the first French attempt to aid the United Irishmen came in late 1796. Unfortunately, the French fleet with soldiers was unable to land in southern Ireland due to poor weather. Although the British imprisoned rebel leaders, the United Irishmen planned another rebellion in May 1798. Despite early desires to unite religious Irish sects, in Wexford, Catholics 'massacred Protestants'. In August, when French forces successfully reached Ireland, 'the Godless French were bemused to find themselves identified as soldiers of the Blessed Virgin' (Doyle, 1989: 341–2).

The Dutch Netherlands, known as the Republic of the Seven United Provinces, became France's first sister republic, with 'patriots' welcoming French forces in 1795. Renamed the Batavian Republic, the unified departments of the Dutch Netherlands struggled to draft and approve a new constitution until early 1798, after the French supported a coup d'état to remove Dutch Federalists from the government (Doyle, 1989: 345–8). Since the Union of Utrecht in 1579 and the formation of the United Provinces in 1648, the Dutch Netherlands had experienced relative religious tolerance. However, the Calvinist Church had a privileged status, and minority religious groups, such as Catholics and Jews, had second-class status. The 1798 constitution for the Batavian Republic 'was a watershed' because 'church and state were more separated', with all citizens getting 'equal rights independent of the religion'. Calvinists no longer dominated, and Catholics and other minorities gained equality (Knippenberg, 2006: 319–20).

The French Convention officially annexed the Austrian Netherlands, or Belgium, in October 1795. Local administrators set out dissolving monasteries, confiscating church lands, and deporting around 600 non-juring priests. When implementing these revolutionary religious policies, the French had been oblivious to rural Belgian religious devotion and opposition to dechristianization and forgetful of the area's recent history. Belgians had experienced their own revolution from 1789 to 1790, when the population pushed back against Emperor Joseph II's liberal reforms, which they perceived as an attack on the Catholic Church. The Brabant Revolution briefly established the independent United Belgian States before the new Holy Roman Emperor Leopold II (r. 1790–2) regained control. Years later, when the French attempted to impose similar religious reforms, the Belgians rebelled again, modelling themselves on the French in the Vendée, adopting the slogan '*for land and religion*' (Doyle, 1989: 348–50; Roegiers and van Sas, 2006: 290–5). In September 1798, Belgian peasants rose up against conscription, but were brutally suppressed. In the aftermath, 7,500 Belgian clergy were renounced for not taking the Directory's oath from the previous year 'requiring them to hate both monarchy and anarchy' (Aston, 2002: 230).

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The German states, like the Italian states, were not a unified nation at the time of the French Revolution; instead, they were part of the Holy Roman Empire. The three most powerful states were Austria, Prussia, and Bavaria, and all three joined the first anti-French coalition in 1792. Yet, there was a 'mixed response' to the French Revolution within German states. For instance, Hungarian Jacobins in Austria 'had plans for a republic, an attack on the Church, and concessions to the serfs' (Doyle, 1989: 202, 211). According to Morten Nordhagen Ottosen, 'Bavaria followed the lead offered by the French example, but several aspects of the Bavarian reform project predated Napoleon and the Revolution ... It was thus to some extent a matter of finishing the unfinished Enlightenment business of subordinating the Catholic Church to the state.' Indeed, in the early nineteenth century, Bavaria introduced religious tolerance, extending rights to Lutherans, Calvinists, and Jews. However, some Bavarian people, especially the 'zealously Catholic' in Tyrol, resisted 'the religious policies of the Bavarian government' and later Napoleonic rule (Ottosen, 2017: 173–201).

Like the revival movement in England, German Pietists responded fervently to French Revolutionary religious ideas. They perceived them as 'false philosophies of the Enlightenment', which they associated with 'the AntiChrist'. Typically a conservative, inward-looking group, Pietists 'became more assertive in the 1790s' (Brown, 2006: 579, 584). For example, Christian Gottlob Pregizer (1751–1824) converted a significant number of Germans to a hymn-singing group referred to as 'Hurrah Christians' (Stoeffler, 1973). Robert R. Palmer referred to the German Pietist response as 'nonpolitical', because they believed 'that true liberty was a spiritual and internal quality' and 'reform would only come from a pure and obedient Christianity, not from 'the spirit of revolt or revolution' (Doyle, 1989: 245; Palmer, 2016: 171–4). The Pietist revival grew even more during a period of peace from 1795 to 1805, as Prussia withdrew from the coalition against France, Bonaparte came to power in France, and romanticism emerged across Europe (Aston, 2002: 276–81).

p. 148 In 1797, the Directory decided to support a revolution in neighbouring Switzerland. Since the beginning of the French Revolution, the Swiss governments actively sought to prevent news of it from spreading amongst its people, even remaining neutral in the revolutionary wars. However, learned Swiss patriots, familiar with Enlightenment ideals, began planning to overthrow the old order and replace it with a new republic. After revolts broke out in late 1797, French armies moved in to help establish a new sister republic, the Helvetic Republic, in early 1798. The Swiss implemented new laws regarding religion that mirrored those in revolutionary France. They confiscated Catholic church lands, established civil marriage, allowed for mixed marriages between Catholics and Protestants, and prohibited new recruits for monasteries. However, the rights of Jews remained limited, requiring twenty years to obtain naturalization. Not all Swiss people supported the new Helvetic Republic. Led by Pankraz Vorster (1753–1829), the Abbot of St Gallen, they sought aid from the British and Austrians in hopes of returning to the old order. In addition to complaints about military service and democratic government, they claimed that Catholics 'were being robbed of their "holy religion"' (Doyle, 1989: 354–6; Palmer, 2016: 171–4).

Revolutionary reverberations continued along trade and news routes further eastward inspiring uprisings in Poland, pro-French sentiment in Berlin, republican conspiracies in Hungary, and even plans in Greece to overthrow the Ottoman Empire. Napoleon Bonaparte's ascendancy further complicated matters as he conquered neighbouring European powers and established satellite kingdoms. Those who resisted Napoleon often emerged after the Napoleonic period with considerable influence and, armed with liberal ideals, challenged their respective conservative regimes. The rise of liberal politicians after the Napoleonic period set the stage for the 1848 Revolutions throughout Europe as well as the nineteenth-century turn towards Marxism, which undergirded the most profound revolution of the twentieth century—the Russian Revolution of 1917.

## Global effects

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The French Revolution's impact on religion went beyond the hexagon and even Europe to have an effect on the world as a whole. In the French Caribbean, Saint-Domingue and French Guiana provide contrasting examples of the effects of the French Revolution on colonial religion. This is discernible in the responses to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. French Guiana became a penal colony in the 1790s, and the French Revolution's first deportees to and from Guiana were refractory priests. Following the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, the revolutionaries in France deported refractory priests to Guiana, hoping to rehabilitate the priests and further colonize the colonial space. In May 1792, the Legislative Assembly adopted legislation requiring the deportation of *any* priest to Guiana at the request of twenty citizens. By March 1793, all non-jurors were to be deported, without the need for any citizens' requests. At the same time, the Colonial Assembly in Guiana ordered the deportation of refractory priests from the colony to the United States and other French colonies. Initially, only six of the seventeen priests there took the oath to the Civil Constitution, so in February 1793, the governor yet again gave the priests the option to take the oath or be deported. Colonial authorities believed non-juring priests were unfit to provide religious instruction to the colony's indigenous population. Of course, if revolutionaries in France intended to rehabilitate refractory

p. 149 ↪ priests deported to Guiana, colonial authorities first needed to remove their own non-juring clergy (Johnson, 2017: 58–64).

There were correlations in colonial Saint-Domingue between taking the oath to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and advocating for free people of colour and the enslaved. Most of the Capuchins took the oath to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, but many Dominicans refused. The Capuchins were the religious authority in the north, and the Dominicans had Catholic control over the west and south. The north had a greater concentration of enslaved peoples, while the west and south had more substantial free populations of colour. Consequently, Capuchins in the north who took the oath were also more likely to want to end slavery, while non-juring Dominicans were advocates for the rights of free people of colour in the west and south. Years later, after France declared general emancipation, a former slave, Toussaint Louverture rose to power in Saint-Domingue. As governor of the colony, Louverture brought together a group of colonists to draft a constitution for Saint-Domingue in 1801. The resulting constitution made Catholicism the official religion of the island, and Louverture worked with Abbé Henri Grégoire (1750–1831), leader of the French National Church Council, for additional constitutional priests and establishment of constitutional bishops in Saint-Domingue (Johnson, 2018: 23–67).

French Revolutionary religious policies also influenced events in the Spanish colony of Santo Domingo, which occupied the western portion of the island shared with French Saint-Domingue. When the Haitian Revolution began, black revolutionary leaders, including Jean-François Papillon (d. c.1800) and Georges Biassou (1741–1801), allied with the neighbouring Spanish authorities, who established a special military unit called the Black Auxiliaries of Charles IV. The black revolutionaries appealed to the Spanish through 'Catholic cultural capital'. They downplayed African influences on their Christianity and emphasized their desire for religious refuge from French impiety claiming they were 'abused blacks'. For instance, they portrayed Vodou hogan Dutty Boukman (d. 1791), who purportedly initiated the Haitian Revolution through a Vodou ceremony, as a Catholic martyr. Also, when another black revolutionary leader working with the Spanish, Jeannot Bullet (d. 1791), captured a convent in Saint-Domingue, committed unspeakable atrocities, and massacred the nuns, Jean-François executed Jeannot in an attempt to ease Spanish reservations about the alliance (Yingling, 2016: 184–367). After the French declared general emancipation, the Spanish disbanded the Black Auxiliaries.

In Spanish Louisiana, French citizens inspired by the revolution in France began a freemasonry movement, with at least two new lodges forming in New Orleans. Abbé Grégoire, leader of the Constitutional Church, sympathized with the freemasons in an essay published in New Orleans. He claimed, 'masonry offered an

institutional framework for establishing a new religion' (Bell, 1997: 154–6). The Spanish Catholic monarch and Spanish colonial authorities in Louisiana opposed masonry and upheld the papal condemnation of it, attempting to suppress the movement. Even after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 transferred the territory to the United States, French Revolutionary religious policies influenced the Catholic Church in Louisiana.

p. 150 Under US rules, the ↵ Louisiana Church was supposed to come under the control of the Bishop of Baltimore, who answered to Rome. However, a lay committee at the St Louis Cathedral in New Orleans rejected the jurisdictional transfer. They assumed the precedent established during the French Revolution, claiming that the Civil Constitution of the Clergy from 1790 gave 'the French nation' independence from Rome and the authority to elect clergy members. Therefore, the resulting schism within the Louisiana Church divided those in support of American leadership and those wanting adherence to the French Revolutionary policies (Bell, 1997: 69–80).

Like Louisiana, Canada was no longer a French colony during the French Revolution, but it still had a significant French population. In 1791, the British divided Canada between the English in the west and the French in east. Initially, French Canadians supported the French Revolution, especially the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*. However, their enthusiasm faded with news from France of the September Massacres and the regicide. The colonial authorities in French Canada 'proclaimed that the population was at war with the Revolution'. Bishop Pierre Denaut (1743–1806) in Quebec stressed the need for Canadians to be loyal to the English monarchy, emphasizing the 'spirit of irreligion' in revolutionary France. He claimed, 'any good Catholic who wishes to preserve his freedom, laws, morals, standards, and religion is also particularly and personally interested'. Because French Canadians significantly outnumbered English Canadians, England took precautions against any possible revolutionary ideas by limiting anyone from coming from France, even if they attempted to enter via the United States. They allowed around fifty non-juring French priests to enter Quebec from 1792 to 1815. Those priests helped craft a mythology that the English acquisition of Canada was 'an act of providence that saved Canadians' souls from 'the sacrilegious, anticlerical and regicidal French Revolution' (Wade, 1950; Tétu, 1989: 3–5; Palmer, 2016: 219–20).

Just before the Revolution, France's eighteenth-century colonial claims in India underwent an administrative reorganization. The changes subordinated most of the colonies to the Governor of Pondicherry. The local Tamil population, divided among Hindus, Christians, and Muslims, were considered French subjects in Pondicherry, and they significantly outnumbered the European residents. When news about the convening of the Estates General and the storming of the Bastille arrived in Pondicherry in February 1790, the white and Indian citizens responded. As white colonists met to elect delegates and compose *cahiers des doléances*, Catholic Tamils 'held a parallel meeting' where they voiced their desires for 'the Governor to ally them with the white's fate' (Wanner, 2017: 58, 60). Refugees fleeing those regions attacked by Tipu Sultan, the ruler of the nearby kingdom of Mysore (r. 1782–99), undoubtedly encouraged this response. Tipu Sultan brutally oppressed Hindus and Christians, so aligning with a revolutionary government purporting to guarantee religious freedom was advantageous. In late September 1792, the French sent a civil commissioner to Pondicherry to implement revolutionary policies, including the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. Through the chronicles of one Tamil, M. Gobalakichenane argues that Pondicherry was 'a land of flourishing new revolutionary ideas and institutions' and its history reveals 'a

p. 151 ↵ *pacific revolution* with [a] sincere and loyal relationship towards the new revolutionary authorities of France, contrasting with what happened in ... Saint-Domingue at the same period'. However, Pondicherry fell to British forces in August 1793, and French authority did not resume in Pondicherry until after the Napoleonic Wars (Gobalakichenane, 2000: 295–308).

## Reverberations through time

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That the French Revolution had a profound effect on Europe at the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century is clear, yet France's experiment with laïcization in the 1790s was a failure. Subsequent revolutions over the course of the 'long nineteenth century' attempted to solve the 'secular' dilemma first posited in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*: How can religion be balanced with the needs of public order? Such a question was dealt with differently during the July Revolution of 1830 and the Revolution of 1848—each solution remained ephemeral, giving way to conservative powers and the Catholic Church. Only in 1905, with the formal separation of church and state, did France seem to find a lasting solution.

Bonaparte's Concordat had opened the doors for the Catholic Church to re-establish itself in the country—a move which precipitated resurgent ultra-Catholic politics in the first half of the nineteenth century. Kept as public servants, Catholic clergy experienced considerable oversight from the Napoleonic regime, but at the same time, they re-established their communities, their hold over local politics, and their control over primary school education in the country. When Bonaparte fell in 1814 and 1815, Catholic communities, especially in areas with sizable Protestant populations, perpetrated acts of retributive violence collectively known as the 'White Terror'. Protestants in the Midi region of France, in particular, faced considerable violence catalysed by the return of Bourbonism and Catholic royalism (Triomphe, 2017). Louis XVIII's Charter declared Catholicism the state religion and set France down a path along which many of the old tropes of sacral absolutism would be revamped for nineteenth-century usage. Famously, Charles X (r. 1824–30), the ultra-Catholic king who assumed the throne after Louis XVIII (r. 1814–15; 1815–24), his brother, died in 1824, was the last French king to exercise the power of the 'divine touch'—a ritual wherein the king could supposedly cure people of scrofula. Charles X exacerbated religious tensions. His ultra-Catholicism was well known, having been infamously exhibited in the Anti-Sacrilege Act of 1825, which intended to make all acts of blasphemy and sacrilege. While the law passed the French Parliament, it was never applied.

p. 152 Throughout the Bourbon Restoration, liberal opposition led by the likes of Benjamin Constant (1767–1830), Pierre Paul Royer-Collard (1763–1845), and the Baron de Barante (1782–1866) remained ideologically embattled. When Jean-Baptiste, Comte de Villèle (1773–1854) introduced the Anti-Sacrilege Act, and when a slew of Catholics from the ministers Pierre-Denis Peyronnet (1778–1854) and Comte de Breteuil demanded the law be passed in order to secure the material holdings of the Church as well as to re-instill piety in the populace following the revolutionary storm, liberals rebuked their arguments in rhetoric that resonated from the Revolution. Such a Catholic law violated the 'freedom of thought' Frenchmen had come to hold dear. Constant was a Protestant. To vote for such a law would be to recognize the sanctity of Catholic holy relics. Religious pluralism and the secular notion of freedom of thought—increasingly defended as a profane principle, whereas religion dealt with the supernatural—remained key to the liberals' rhetoric. Thus, while the law passed, it was immediately repealed following the July Revolution of 1830. The Orléanist king Louis-Philippe's so-called 'liberal' regime marked a significant shift away from the religious politics of Bourbon Restoration (Rader, 1973: 75).

Louis Philippe's reign (r. 1830–48) came to an end with the Revolution of 1848. The Orléanist period had been unpopular among France's clergy—mainly for its restrictive education policies. As such the 1848 Revolution was welcomed cautiously by those in the Catholic press eager to expand the Church's place in French society. The editor of the Catholic newspaper *L'Univers* announced that 'God speaks by the voice of events. The Revolution of 1848 is the intimation of Providence' (Price, 2017: 60). Whether this proclamation resonated with the theology of most French Catholics is unclear; instead, it might have been a reflection of the religious trauma inflicted on the Catholic Church by the Revolution of 1789. The older members of the clerical fold lived with this memory, while the very real traces of the Revolution's destruction could be seen in churches and cathedrals around the country, the reconstruction of which had only just started during the

Restoration period. These Catholics sought to make religious liberty compatible with ‘liberty’ in general. While the Church mobilized its base in the early elections of the Revolution, the faltering economy, driven by the ineptitude of Louis Blanc’s (1811–82) national workshops, in addition to the spread of the Revolution beyond France’s borders and in particular to Italy, where Pope Pius IX (1846–78) found himself imprisoned by the Roman Republic mobilized the Church towards counter-revolution once again. The eventual election of Louis Napoleon (President of France, 1848–52; Emperor Napoleon III of the French, r. 1852–70), the ‘rescue’ of the pope and the end of the Roman Republic of 1848, and the eventual creation of the Second French Empire in France ended the cycle of revolution and Catholic counter-revolution.

The short-lived Paris Commune formally separated church and state on 3 April 1871, but the law was rolled back with Paris’ defeat by the Prussians. Over the course of the Third French Republic, French politics shifted more and more towards a policy of *laïcité*. In 1879, at the behest of Charles Boyssset (1817–1901) and the republicans in the legislature, priests lost their administrative positions in hospitals and charitable boards. Nuns too found their positions eliminated and filled by lay women. The Ferry Laws in 1881–2 secularized education, removing clerics from one of the last bastions of the Catholic Church’s infrastructural role in France. In 1905, the French Republic adopted a formal program of laïcization, which has remained largely in place ever since.

## Conclusion

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The French Revolution’s reverberations were personal, geographical, and temporal. Revolutionaries had to contend with the Old Regime’s reliance on the Catholic Church, its infrastructure, as well as its relationship to Catholic Christendom beyond France’s borders—to kingdoms neighbouring France and spaces increasingly mapped by missionaries, some of whom fled persecution at home, out into the empire and beyond. Power structures that undergirded the sacral absolutism system were difficult to remove without collateral damage and the abrasive efforts of the early revolutionaries guaranteed that the French Revolution would become both a ‘world-historical’ and ‘*otherworld*-historical’ event.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 witnessed a similar trajectory. From the rapid expansion of rights at the cost of the established Orthodox Church, to the rapid escalation of violence, to the tolls of civil war, to the ensuing turn to a dictatorial government that clamped down on all forms of organized religion, the Bolshevik Revolution once again saw the language of universal equality stand in opposition to religious corporatism (Mayer, 2002). How do we balance individual rights with the rights of the congregation or collective? How do we balance liberty with equality? Such are the defining questions of our modern world.

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CHAPTER

## 9 Religion and Nationality in Europe

Steven Grosby

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### Abstract

Throughout European history, the relationship between religion and nationality has been varied and complex. Numerous times religion has been a bearer of national traditions and a nation has been a bearer of religious traditions, as can be seen in the Church's conciliarism and the use of the Biblical image of Israel in Christian Hebraism. However, there have also existed sharp tensions between religion and nationality, as can be seen in how the New Testament has been understood and in Canon law. These variations must be accounted for. Why and how has religion both contributed to the consolidation and continued existence of a nation, and been disruptive of that consolidation and continued existence? When pursuing answers posed by these questions, a more accurate understanding of culture, religion, and nationality will be necessary by taking into account the distinction between unity and uniformity.

**Keywords:** Bible, Canon law, Christianity, Catholic Church, conciliarism, culture, Hebraism, Israel, nation

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THE relation between religion and nationality throughout European history has been varied and complex. Numerous times throughout that history religion has been a bearer of national traditions and a nation has been a bearer of religious traditions. However, there have also been times when sharp tensions have existed between religion and nationality. These variations must be accounted for. Why and how has religion contributed to the consolidation and continued existence of a nation, and why and how has it been disruptive of that consolidation and existence?

That religion has both contributed to, and disrupted, the formation of nations poses a number of problems. When pursuing these problems, a more accurate understanding of culture, religion, and nationality will be necessary. What is meant by a 'national culture'? How is it a unity such that one culture is distinguishable from another? How does that unity differ from uniformity? Since the relation between religion and nationality varies, in what ways is religion distinct from nationality? What is meant by 'religion', and what is meant by 'nation'?

## Analytic framework and its complications

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p. 157 The immediate task is to lay out a framework that accounts for both convergence and divergence of religion and nationality, the latter term used here to convey the myriad, protean appearances of nations throughout European history. Religion and nationality have often ‘come together’ into a unity that allows one to recognize the existence of a national culture. The term ‘national culture’ refers to a distinctive combination of diverse traditions of territorially circumscribed patterns of action. It is a distinctive combination ↴ because one national culture will differ from another. Those traditions may take objective form through formulated doctrines and propositions, such as theologies and law codes, and a distinctive inter-relation of institutions organized around those doctrines and propositions, respectively churches and courts whose laws are enforced by a state. Traditions may not have achieved objective form, remaining embedded in the ebb and flow of life as habit and custom.

### Culture, unity, and uniformity

The territorially bounded, distinctive combination of relatively stable orientations of human action of a national culture does not mean that this combination is uniform. Those patterns and the meanings of life conveyed by them, while they come together, are not only diverse but may even be inconsistent with one another. There has, for example, existed a perennial tension between hierocratic and political authority, as seen in Pope Gelasius’ distinction, in his letter (494 CE) to the emperor Anastasius II, between the authority of the bishops and the power of the king or state. That distinction had already been developed by Augustine in his recognition of the ‘two cities’ of God and man in *The City of God*, and it was subsequently formulated by Pope Boniface VIII (1294–1303) in *Unam Sanctam* (1302) as the ‘doctrine of two swords’ (Tierney, 1964). While the Eastern, Greek tradition tended toward caesaropapism, the relation between these two cities or two swords or what is Caesar’s and what is God’s (Matthew 22:21) throughout European history has remained contested. Thus, while those traditions and patterns of action constitutive of a national culture cohere into a unity as expressed in the existence of that culture, that unity should never be understood to imply a uniformity of human action or a uniform society.

There is stability of social relations implied by the existence of a culture over time; but there is also change of social relations arising from both the incommensurable diversity of those traditions and practices, and the continually new demands posed by life. An examination of the relation between religion and nationality must account for both stability and change, while keeping in mind the distinction between unity and uniformity. Only by doing so will one be able to account for the complex variation of the relation between religion and nationality.

p. 158 One manifestation of the stability of a culture is the continuity over time of a symbol designating the name of a people and its territory, for example, English/England, French/France, and Poles/Poland. However, while these symbolic designations, the origins of which are found early in the European Middle Ages (Reynolds, 1984: 250–331), may persist over time, as they clearly have, the contents conveyed by those symbols have unavoidably undergone changes, even transformations. The England or France or Poland of the twelfth century is not the same England or France or Poland of the eighteenth century. Similarly, the Christianity of the tenth century is different from that of the twelfth, after the reforms of Pope Gregory VII (1073–85), and from the seventeenth, after the Protestant Reformation. It is even likely that these symbolic designations refer ↴ to different meanings that coexist in tension with one another. After all, designations like England, France, and Poland or Christianity convey different meanings to different people not only over time but also at any particular point in time; for otherwise, there would be no political differences within nations or doctrinal disputes and organizational divisions within Christianity. Change or even transformation of a tradition does not mean that previous meanings have been entirely discarded, as can be

observed, for example, in the continuing attachments to a region within a nation or to stateless nations such as Wales or Scotland within the United Kingdom. Thus, the stability of a national culture conveyed by the obvious continuity of its self-designation over time does not mean that there are no less obvious differences or changes in how the self, here the nation, is understood by its members. It is only a relative stability of only a relative unity.

There is no need to confine ourselves to this abstract level of generalization in appreciating the distinction between unity and uniformity. A family is different from a business firm. A religion is different from a nation. That there are businesses run by families, that there are heads of households that work for businesses, that a church may be handmaiden to a nation: these possibilities pointing to their coming together to form a cultural unity are taken for granted. But doing so should not gainsay that the purposes of these different organizations are qualitatively, that is, analytically or logically, diverse. Thus, even when religion and nationality converge, we want to know what is distinctive of religion, what is distinctive of nationality, and in what ways they differ from one another.

Not always but generally the traditions constitutive of a culture have been territorially circumscribed. The most obvious example of a territorially delimited tradition is language; but it is only one among many. For example, most law codes—ancient, medieval, and modern—draw a distinction between native-born and foreigner. The tradition may not have been designed or planned, as in the case of a territorially delimited language. The tradition may be planned but not directed by a state, for example: Cyril's and especially Methodius' (d. 885) translation of the Bible into Old Church Slavonic and the latter's efforts to establish a Slavonic liturgy; Wycliffe's translation of the Bible into English (c.1380); Hussite translations of the Bible into Czech and Hungarian (c.1430); and, as is well known, Luther's translation of the Bible into German (c.1520). These translations—results of directed undertakings by members of an institution, in this case, a church—facilitated the convergence between religion and nationality both by stabilizing a distinctive, national language and by 'opening up', that is, popularizing and even 'nationalizing', the Bible and liturgy.

Traditions may, of course, may be the result of a state's designed policy, for example, enforcing its law throughout its territorial jurisdiction, as one finds during the reign of the English King Henry II (r. 1154–89) (Pollock and Maitland, 1898). And a state's policy may be directed to consolidating unplanned traditions, for example: the language clause of the 1535 Act of Union between England and Wales that made English the official language of Wales; or, as in France, the language ordinance of 1539 of King Francis I (r. 1515–47) requiring all legal documents to be in French, and, beginning in 1634, the supervision of the French language by the *Académie française*; or when a governmental decision is made either to translate scripture from Latin into the vernacular language of the nation or to make more consistent the liturgy, as in England, respectively, the *King James Bible* (1611) and the *Book of Common Prayer* (1549); or obviously so when a religion is established as the religion of the state in the aftermath of the Peace of Augsburg (1555) and the Treaty of Westphalia (1648). But even with these examples of the coming together of religion and nationality, the analyst must resist an overly simplistic understanding of that convergence. For example, the proclamation of 1535 establishing English as the official language of Wales, thereby either extending English nationality or consolidating British nationality, did not prevent the decision of parliament in 1563 to provide Welsh translations of the Bible and the prayer book, the likely result of which was 'to rejuvenate Welsh national consciousness' (Hastings, 1997: 73). Clearly, the interests of parliament should not be understood as having been uniform.

This 'territorialization' of tradition opens up the development of a nation with its culture of geographically delimited, hence distinctive, traditions. Whether traditions are unplanned or designed or a combination of both, whether they are undertaken by an institution like a church or a state, cultures are not interchangeable; for differences exist between respectively different societies. Clearly, there is a great deal of evidence that individuals who lived within those societies have thought so. Throughout European history, including from early in the medieval period, individuals of one society have distinguished themselves from

those of another by territorial location, language, religion, and even by climate, dress, diet, and temperament. One need only recall, for example: the eleventh statute of the 1297 Irish Parliament forbidding Englishmen to wear the clothes of the ‘degenerate Irish’ (Lydon, 1995: 104); or the Dutch, sixteenth-century ‘black legend of Spanish cruelty’ that portrayed the Catholic Spanish as ‘lecherous, treacherous and cruel’ (Pérez, 2016: 186); or the seventeenth-century English view that the Dutch were ‘lusty, fat, two-legged cheese-worms’ (Rommelse, 2016: 201); or the English accusation of the sexual immorality of the Welsh that arose in the controversy over the ‘blue books’ in the 1847 government report on education in Wales (Bebbington, 1982: 494).

Religion, whatever else its goals, may not have been merely a bearer of national traditions but also may have contributed to the formation of a nation through various developments. Some of them have already been alluded to, for example, the translations of the Bible and liturgy into the vernacular, and some that will be briefly discussed, such as national saints, the organization of the church, and the ‘confessionalization of a territory’. However, the phrase, ‘whatever else its goals’, conveys a necessary qualification. While there is abundant evidence for the coming together of religion and nationality throughout European history, the Christian monotheistic tradition nonetheless exists doctrinally in tension with nationality. The early Christian tradition understandably interpreted Romans 3:12 as being not national but universal, ‘For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him’ (see also Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11).

p. 160 This universalism created interpretative difficulties for early Christianity, once (following the rejection of Marcionism) the, for lack of a better term, ‘national-universal’ ↵ Hebrew Bible was included in the Christian Bible as the Old Testament. For the most part, those difficulties were dealt with by interpreting, by use of analogy, the Old Testament exclusively through the lens of the New Testament, as in the apologetic works of the second century CE: Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho* and Irenaeus’ *Against Heresies*. For example, references to the king of the nation of Israel in Psalms 2 and 118 were understood as referring not to David or a future human king of Israel, but always to Jesus; or the remnant of the true Israel was interpreted as referring not to the restored, territorially sovereign nation of Israel but to the universal Church. This use of analogy to interpret the Hebrew Bible was already found in the New Testament, most obviously in Paul’s explicitly allegorical ‘two covenants’: Hagar’s covenant of the flesh or slavery and Sarah’s covenant of the spirit or the freedom of heavenly Jerusalem (Galatians 4:24–6). Nevertheless, over time and with the delay of the second coming of Jesus the Messiah, universal Christianity, with its orientation to eternal life in heaven, could not avoid working out its existence in this world, involving not only how to carry on as an organization but also accommodating itself, albeit with variation, to the earthly power of the state and to the national divisions within humanity as conveyed not in the New Testament but in the Old Testament, for example, as in Genesis 10:31, ‘These are the descendants of Shem, according to their families, the languages, their lands, and their nations’ (see also Genesis 10:5, 20, 32).

When doing so, Christianity eventually turned to Aristotle, as in Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica*. According to the *Summa* and the Catholic tradition in general, Christians’ attachments to nation and state are legitimate, although the respective patriotism and loyalty are subordinated to the higher and greater love of and for God that transcends national divisions (Grosby, 2016). There was, however, a more obvious resource to which Christians turned in dealing with the affairs of this world, one found explicitly within the Bible, namely, the image of the nation of Israel in the Old Testament—an image that by being brought from the past into the present in order to legitimate the existence of a nation within otherwise universal Christianity was allowed to exist on its own rather than being dissolved through allegorical interpretation into the ‘true Israel’ of the Christian elect. This turn to the Old Testament within the Christian monotheistic tradition is what is meant by the phrase ‘Christian Hebraism’ (Grosby, 2011).

Religion has at times been explicitly a bearer of national traditions, for example, as when there is a national church as in England or Sweden, or manifestly so with the ‘new Israels’ of the Dutch (Schama, 1987) and

English (Smith, 2007), or Bismarck's persecution of Roman Catholicism during the *Kulturkampf* of the 1870s (Smith, 1995). There have been instances when religion has implicitly been a bearer of national traditions, for example, the 1682 Declaration of the Gallican Liberties of the French Catholic Church, or Catholic Poland situated between Lutheran Germany and Eastern Orthodox Russia. However, as has been observed, religion has also existed in tension with nationality and, although with variation between the Catholic and Protestant traditions, the national state. While the national state within Catholic tradition receives doctrinal support as it secures earthly peace, it has also been a source of tension with the Church, as can be readily seen in the Investiture Controversy at the end of the eleventh and the beginning of the twelfth centuries. In the Protestant tradition, attitudes towards the national state have varied, ranging from obedience arising from an interpretation of Romans 13:1–7, as with Luther, to indifference, if not hostility, as with the Mennonites and Anabaptists. Even when religion and nationality have coalesced in the formation of a national culture, religion or, more properly, a religious organization of one kind or another has stood in judgement of the nation.

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## Defining religion

A further difficulty in analysing the relation between religion and nationality is the use of the very categories: 'religion' and 'nation'. The justification of those categories is their heuristic usefulness in dealing with a complex variation of evidence throughout European history; but formulating their definitions has posed numerous difficulties. 'Religion', as a category that would encompass different religions, has been notoriously difficult to define. There have been not only 'churches', membership in which is compulsory as it is determined by birth or location of residence, but also 'sects', membership in which is voluntary as it is determined by adult, creedal adherence indifferent to the beliefs of one's ancestors, and the location of one's residence (Troeltsch, 1931: 331–43).

There have been differences over what should be the relation between the demands arising from the belief in God and one's loyalty to the national state. Does or does not a belief in God also require the believer to obey the law? If so, and it need not be so, is that law the law of the church or the law of the state? Are these law codes different; and if so, what distinguishes their jurisdictions? These problems were explicitly recognized in the Canon law tradition, for example, by Stephen of Tournai (1128–1203) of the so-called 'French School' in his Preface (c.1169) to *Decretum Gratiani* (c.1140), 'the two dominions are the institutional Church and the secular government; the double order of jurisdiction is divine and human law. Render to each its own and all will be in accord' (Somerville and Brasington, 1998: 195). The question of the jurisdiction of these law codes was obviously a pressing matter during and in the aftermath of the Gregorian reform, as the Church demanded its autonomy in affairs understood by the Church to be solely those of the Church (Berman, 1983). Thus, what was the public law of 'temporal affairs', what was the ecclesiastical law of 'spiritual affairs', and what were the differences between them? These problems, as explicitly formulated in Gratian's *Decretum*, and in the various commentaries (glosses) on it, required answers. The answers to these questions, rather than resulting in a state of affairs where 'all will be in accord', have sharply differed over time and among various currents within Christendom.

Further complicating the attempt to define religion is that there have also been throughout European history disagreements over what is meant by the term 'God', ranging from an orthodox Trinitarian monotheism to a Unitarian monotheism (Polish Brethren and Socinians) to dualism (Albigensians) and even rejection of the existence of a transcendental, divine power. There was also, of course, what we classify as 'pagan' religion before conversion to Christianity in late Antiquity and the early medieval period. And one may be entitled to classify twentieth-century fascism, through its ideological idolatry of both state and nation, and its attendant rejection of Genesis 1:27, 'So God created humankind in his image', as a pagan revival.

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Confronted by these difficulties, the analyst may attempt to seek refuge from them by defining religion as a set of beliefs and practices or as a way of life. However, to do so is unsatisfactory because such a definition obscures or even eliminates what is distinctive of religion from other ways of life, for example, from the beliefs and practices of the family or business firm, or those constitutive of a nation, even though these various beliefs and practices, while analytically diverse, have coalesced, influencing one another.

There is a tradition of analysis that is, in effect, indifferent to any distinctiveness characteristic of religion, namely, functionalism (Radcliffe-Brown, 1935 [1952], 1945 [1952]). The focus of the latter on the stability—coherence and continuity—of a society reduces religion to how its beliefs and practices function in contributing to that stability by reaffirming and strengthening the attachments of individuals to society. The problem with the functionalist analysis, irrespective of its merit in elaborating the contribution of various factors to achieving social stability, is that it assumes an internal consistency of the purposes of human action as components of the structure of a society. However, this internal consistency—uniformity—even when there is a cultural unity should not be assumed; for the evidence indicates that religion may or may not contribute to the strengthening of those attachments. Once again, there have been times when religion has functioned this way, for example, national churches or the peculiar phenomenon of national saints such as Olaf for Norway (995–1030), Louis IX for France (1214–70), Patrick for Ireland (fifth century), George for England (d. c.303), Stanisław the Martyr for Poland (1030–79), and Sava the Enlightener for Serbia (1174–1236), or divine protectors of a nation such as Mary, ‘Queen of Poland’, in particular at the Battle of Częstochowa (1655) (see Black Madonna of Częstochowa) (Davies, 1982: 401, 172). But there have been times when it has not done so, for example and as already been noted, beginning in 1078 with the insistence of Pope Gregory VII that ‘no one of the clergy shall receive the investiture with a bishopric or abbey or church from the hand of the emperor or king or any lay person’ (Emerton, 1932: 133).

p. 163 It is true, as A. R. Radcliffe-Brown (1945 [1952]) observed, that religion may, and often does, contribute to social cohesion. It does so in two ways. First, religion, as a bearer of morality, whether conveyed legally (in the Catholic tradition, the Canon law; in the Protestant tradition, the Decalogue) or not, reinforces the attachments of one individual to another necessary to hold a society together. It also, by positing the existence of a higher power upon which the prosperity, life, and salvation of the individual depends, promotes, as Friedrich Schleiermacher (1988 [1799]) and Rudolf Otto (1923) argued, recognition of dependency that may be easily conflated with the dependency of the individual on the society in which he or she was born and whose continuing existence is intertwined with the existence of the individual. This twofold contribution is abundantly clear when a nation is understood to have a providential role in history, as is the case when a European nation is understood as a ‘new Israel’ (Manuel, 1992: 99–107; Grosby, 2011). This appeal to a national providence is also seen in the idea of a New or Third Rome in the Russian Orthodox tradition, albeit within a developing imperial context, as it emerged in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, for example, in *The Narrative of Avrramy Politsyn*, where the territory of ‘Holy Russia’ is viewed as inseparable from the Orthodox religion (Cherniavsky, 1958; Carleton, 2016). Is it too much to say that with the phenomena of national saints, new Israels, and the Holy Russia of the Third Rome we have, de facto, the monolatry of a national religion, even though complicated by the formal universalism of Christian dogma? Be that as it may, the relation between religion and nationality remains complex; for, once again, religion may also be disruptive of social cohesion. If religion is defined as a set of practices oriented around beliefs in an other-worldly deity or reality which, in the monotheistic tradition, conveys meaning or purpose to human existence that bears on human conduct in this world, there is always a potential for religion, by positing what ought to be (salvation), to stand in judgement of what is, the affairs of this world and earthly society.



## Defining nation

The nation, too, has been difficult to define, although there have been worthy attempts to do so (Smith, 1998, 2009). Some scholars have thought that the attachments of the individual, as a member of a nation, to the nation are to meet the consequences of the existence of the state by contributing to the solidarity necessary for that existence (Breuilly, 1982), or as a result of the need for an educated, mobile workforce of modern industrial capitalism (Gellner, 1983). These analyses of nationality suffer from an over reliance on a functionalist approach through, in effect, dissolving its distinctiveness by reducing the attachments constitutive of a nation to how they function in maintaining the stability of either the state or the modern economy.

If there is heuristic usefulness to the category 'nation' that distinguishes it from other social relations such as the family, business firm, city-state, or church, it is as a designation for a relatively extensive, yet bounded social relation of territorial kinship. Expressive of the territorial kinship of the nation is the previously referred to, historically ubiquitous terminological conflation between terms for a people and for a land: English/England, French/France, Germans/Germany, and so forth, and the pervasive use of the terms fatherland, motherland, and homeland. The family is also a relation of kinship, but one that is formed around recognition of—the significance attributed to—genetic descent. A business firm is, as a category, analytically indifferent to any significance accorded to territory as it is organized around the economic activity of pursuing profit in the production and sale of a good or service. A city-state, while territorially constituted, is limited in its territorial scope. At least dogmatically, Christianity is indifferent to this significance accorded to territory, for the homeland of the Christian is heavenly Jerusalem (Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 11:16; see also Revelation 21).

p. 164 The individual recognizes himself or herself to be related to others who also recognize themselves to be members of a nation generally as a consequence of the significance ↪ accorded to birth in a relatively extensive yet bounded territory. Thus, the nation signifies a self-classification arising from the tracing of descent, albeit not within a family but within a territory; thus, it is an anthropological category of kinship (Grosby, 2005, 2018a). The national state is the political organization of this anthropological relation of territorial kinship for the purpose of the administration of power so as to act in the world. The historical justification for the analytical distinction between nation and state is the existence of both nations without states, for example, Poland during the eighteenth century, and empires that contain numerous nations, for example, the Habsburg, Ottoman, Russian, and Soviet Empires. One limitation of the functionalist interpretation of nationality is that it does not distinguish between the relation of territorial kinship, the nation, and the power to regulate that relation, the national state.

As a social relation of territorial kinship, the nation is formed around a geographically horizontal axis of designated borders, which, in turn, determine the 'we' of the nation. However, the boundaries of this territorial kinship are not given; they develop over time. Thus, there is a second axis to the constitution of nationality: temporal depth. The past bears on the present recognition of how the nation is understood by its members, not only in what is its territory but also in determining those individuals who while no longer living are still thought of as part of the 'we' (one's national ancestors) of the nation. The territorial axis is conveyed symbolically, for example, by maps and monuments; the temporal axis is also sustained symbolically, for example, through myths, traditions, histories, and numerous rituals, for example, obviously national days of remembrance but also events like the Welsh *eisteddfodau*, all of which undergo modification, occasionally dramatically so, as the memory of the territorially located past is subject to the changing demands of the present (Armstrong, 1982; Smith, 2009).

This second, temporal axis indicates that the formation of a nation is an ongoing process in the constitution of an always developing shared recognition of what it means to be territorially related. It is thus not historiographically useful to point to one specific moment for when a fully formed nation came into

existence. There is no such thing as a fully formed nation. As a result, analytical quandaries are unavoidable. For example, while the terms Germany and Germans or Italy and Italians existed throughout the Middle Ages, regional attachments were often more salient than national, thereby forcing the analyst to resort to the appearance of adumbrations of German and Italian nationality during, say, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Since both the territorial extent and temporal depth of a nation are beyond the immediate experience of any individual in contrast to, for example, the limited locus of the familial home, the constitution and continued existence of a nation involves traditions and their transmission through symbolic representation and attendant interpretation, that is, shared acts of the imagination. However, these acts of the imagination are neither arbitrary nor fanciful, as unfortunately implied by the fashionable description of the nation as an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983); for their focus is meaningful, specifically, the life-sustaining territory of the nation and, as a national state, the safeguarding and ordering of life through self-government. As with religion, the analyst must take into account why the nation is significant to the individual. This, then, is the framework for examining the relation between religion and nationality.

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## Convergence and divergence

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In laying out a framework for examining the relation between religion and nationality, several examples of both convergence and divergence of that relation have already been observed. In what follows, selected aspects of the relation will be pursued in more detail because, while attended to by historians of Christianity in Europe, they have been generally neglected by scholars of nationalism.

Even with the not inconsiderable problems posed by competing legal jurisdictions, divided sovereignty, and divided loyalty, as seen, for example in the conflict from 1162 to 1170 between the English King Henry II and the Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Becket, portrayed by T. S. Eliot in his 1935 play *Murder in the Cathedral*, or at the end of the thirteenth century between the French King Philip IV (the Fair) (r. 1285–1314) and Pope Boniface VIII (1294–1303) which, as Joseph Strayer (1980: 299) argued, created the conditions for subsequent Declaration of Gallican Liberties, it is understandable, at least doctrinally, why there would be a divergence between the recognition that all human beings are children of the one God of universal Christianity and the territorial divisions of humanity conveyed by nations and national states. Not only did scripture insist upon this universalism (Romans 3:12; Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11) but so, too, did the law: both the *Corpus iuris civilis* (Roman law), as according to the Digest (50.1.33), 'Rome is the common fatherland of us all' (Watson, 1998: 420); and the *Corpus iuris canonici* (Church's Canon law), whose jurisdiction, throughout Europe, was applicable to all Christians irrespective of their nationality (Helmholz, 1996: 1–5, 33–6). That universalism found anthropological, legal, and political expression through empire, notably in the 212 Edict of Caracalla which granted citizenship to all free men throughout the Roman empire, in the *translatio imperii* of Charlemagne's empire, and perhaps today in the aspiration of the European Union with its transnational Court of Justice and Court of Human Rights (Jacobson, 1996).

This universalism of both doctrinal Christianity and empire was expressed well by David Martin (1978: 100), 'Europe is a unity by virtue of having possessed one Caesar and one God, i.e. by virtue of Rome'. However, Martin rightly continued by noting 'it [Europe] is a diversity by virtue of the existence of nations'. The problems of the convergence and divergence of religion and nationality exist in the merit of both of these observations and the complexities of their combination.

However understandable the doctrinal universalism of Christianity and its imperial expression may be, the classification of the self on the basis of birth and residence in a particular territory has been pervasive and perennial (Grosby, 1995, 2005, 2018a). While the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia legally codified nationality by insisting upon the convergence of a people, territory, and religion, this confessional 'territorialization' did

p. 166 not ↴ begin at that time; and it certainly was not novel to the so-called ‘Age of Nationalism’ of the nineteenth century. The influence of historically variable territorial attachments on religion has been continual.

In the legal exercise of power throughout a realm, it must not be forgotten that throughout much of European medieval history the king’s court consisted of bishops and archdeacons serving as advisors and administrators. They were, as a consequence, solicitous of the well-being of not only the Church but also their earthly realm. This involvement of prelates in the administration of the affairs of what was often understood by them to be their nation is likely one reason for the deflection of the otherwise universal orientation of Christianity. This participation of prelates in the affairs of the realm raises the broader problem of the bearing of the organization of the Church on the development of a nation.

There are two considerations having to do with ecclesiastical organization that bear on the accommodation of universal Christianity to nationality. The first is the extent to which that organization corresponded with a national jurisdiction. The second moves beyond correspondence by posing whether or not there developed a loyalty among prelates and the laity to a church as a national institution. As to the first consideration, throughout European history, although with evident variation, not only did prelates participate in the administration of the realm but also rulers of the realm were religious heads of their respective churches. More will be observed about the relation between ecclesiastical organization and nationality. As to the second consideration, theological and political developments, analysed so well by Ernst Kantorowicz (1957: 193–272), resulted in the *corpus ecclesiae mysticum* becoming conflated with the *corpus reipublicae mysticum*, and, thus, where martyrdom, for the sake not of the Church or heaven but of the nation, conflated *caritas* with a patriotic *pro patria mori*. This conflation was surely abetted by the cult of national saints, and manifestly so when the saint had been a king, for example, Louis IX (Hallam, 1982).

Returning to the relation between ecclesiastical organization and nationality, during the period before the Norman Conquest and after that until the subsequent consolidation of an English national state under Henry II, the Church in England was centred at Canterbury, with bishops distributed throughout the smaller kingdoms. Here, the possibility that this ecclesiastical organization had an influence on the development of the English nation must be considered. In doing so, a fully formed English nation during, for example, the eighth and ninth centuries is not to be found; but, once again, there is no such thing as a fully formed nation, as one is always dealing with a relative unity of discordant and developing attachments.

Nevertheless, that there was recognition, however elementary, of an English nation seems clear enough from the very title of Bede’s work (c.731), *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (The Ecclesiastical History of the English People). While the work is surely a history of the Church and its organization, it is not merely that; for it is an ecclesiastical history of the *gens Anglorum*, of the English people, thus, Bede’s history becomes, or certainly was subsequently understood as, a national history (Hastings, 1997: 37). Obviously relevant here is the previous observation of the significance of a unifying symbol—in this case, the *gens* (or

p. 167 *nacio*/ ↴ *natio*) *Anglorum* (English, England)—in the uneven and ongoing process of the development of a nation.

Bede’s *History* was by no means an isolated example. During, for example, the twelfth century, there appeared William of Malmesbury’s *Gesta Regnum Anglorum* and *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, Aelred of Rievaulx’s *Genealogia regum Anglorum*, and Henry of Huntingdon’s *Historia Anglorum* (Gillingham, 1995). Here, again, note the use of the genitive *Anglorum* as a symbol designating a people. That this symbol from one history to another indicates variations of representation is obvious. For Bede, as is clear from the conclusion of his *History*, there remained the pronounced salience of Wessex, Mercia, and Northumbria within the, hence, conceptually relatively unstable, but nonetheless employed term ‘English’. However imprecise Bede’s use of the term ‘English’ may have been, he clearly had in mind, for example, in his opening description of Britain in Book One, distinctions between what he described as the four nations (*gentes*, but *nationes* in other places): English, British, Scots, and Picts, each with their own language with

Latin in common among them (Bede, 1969: 17). For William (1080–1143), Aelred (1110–1167), Huntingdon (1080–1160), and manifestly so subsequently, the terms English and England achieved greater stability. The emergence of a centralized state with a law enforced throughout its territory was surely a factor contributing to that stability, but other factors contributing to the unification of the English people deserve greater attention, for example, monastic reforms, including the establishment of forty or more monasteries throughout the realm, by King Edgar during the last quarter of the tenth century (Banton, 1982).

As historians of Christianity know, the ecclesiastical organization of dioceses and bishoprics followed previously existing or emerging territorial jurisdictions, whether from the Roman Empire or emerging national states. Thus, similar contributions of ecclesiastical organization to the emergence of a nation are found throughout early European history, as can be seen, for example, in Gregory of Tours' *History of the Franks* and the eighth-century *Liber Historiae Francorum*, where clearly, as with *Anglorum*, one should not overlook the signifier *Francorum*. These histories, qua history, posit that temporal depth constitutive of a nation.

A few additional of the many examples of the relation between ecclesiastical organization and nationality are the papal segregation of Poland from the aspirations of the Teutonic Knights, and clearly in the distinctions of the Council of Constance (1414–18) between *nationes principales* (Gallicana, Italica, Anglicana, Germanica, Hispanica) and *nationes particulares*, for example, Poland, Bohemia, and Hungary (Hirschi, 2012: 81–8). Thus, *natio* came to signify both an ecclesiastical and secular territorial jurisdiction, as the Church was not, and evidently could not be, indifferent to pre-existing and developing territorial distinctions in the administration of its spiritual affairs. Scholars of nationalism have for the most part not paid attention to how these ecclesiastical jurisdictions contributed to the consolidation and continued existence of nationality.

p. 168 While the logical conclusion of this territorialization of Christianity was the Protestant national churches, it is clearly incorrect to assume that its origins are with the Peace of Augsburg (1555) or the Treaty of Westphalia (1648). The Protestant national churches returned Christianity to its earlier relation between national state and church, except for one important difference. The Protestant reformation, bolstered by the doctrine of the two kingdoms in contrast to the doctrine of the two swords, undermined Canon law as a distinct and at times competing legal jurisdiction, thereby contributing, however unintentionally, to the unified sovereignty of the national state.

Perhaps the most obvious, certainly intriguing historical expression of the convergence of religion and nationality were the 'new Israels' throughout European history, where Israel is the prototype of a providential nation chosen by God (Grosby, 2002, 2011; Smith, 2007: 246). It is all the more intriguing given the paradox of a Christian nation understanding itself as a continuation of the Jewish nation, and especially so given the presence of Jews in Europe, even with their expulsion from England (1290), France (1306 and 1394), and Spain (1492). However paradoxical, Christian recourse to the image of the nation of Israel of the Old Testament is understandable; for within the symbolic repertoire of the Christian tradition, ancient Israel is the most obvious vehicle to convey adherence to the idea of nationality within otherwise doctrinally universal Christianity.

This reanimation of the image of the nation of ancient Israel has been much discussed, with justifiable emphasis on the contribution of the Israelite covenantal tradition through the Calvinist influence on the Dutch and English (Schama, 1987; Manuel, 1992; Smith, 2007). However, recourse to the image of ancient Israel as a chosen nation is evident throughout European history. For example, it is found as early as the eighth and ninth centuries in France (Wallace-Hadrill, 1983: 166–7, 253). Later, in Pope Clement V's *Rex Gloriarum* (1311), we find the recognition that 'like the people of Israel ... the Kingdom of France, as a special people chosen by God to carry out divine commands, is distinguished by signs of special honor and grace' (Strayer, 1980: 295).

It is true, as Smith (2007: 222) emphasized, that these earlier references to ancient Israel often revolved around the divine election of the Davidic kingship, as conveyed by 2 Samuel 7, in contrast to the later, Protestant focus on covenantal theology which, as such, was democratizing and, as Smith put it, 'energizing'. However, the king, too, has been a focus of national attachment. Certainly in the Israelite tradition, the messianic descendant of David was to restore the national sovereignty of Israel. The problem, as it appeared in the ninth century, is as follows. While the Church viewed the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire as *salvator mundi*, established by God in imitation of Christ, the Christ-like, imperial Louis II nonetheless understood himself as one who was king of the Franks since he ruled 'all the territories of those who are of our own flesh and blood' (quoted in Wallace-Hadrill, 1983: 254). What has to be accounted for is, first, the use of the term 'Franks' (although, for Louis, the territory likely encompassed both east and west Francia, with an apparent conceptual conflation of territory—Francia—and people—Franks) and, second, the references to the Franks as Israel within the context of doctrinally universal Christianity. One searches for a historiographical category that would be heuristically useful to characterize this deflection from Christian universalism, where the model—either the Davidic Christian king or the covenantal Christian society of a new Israel—was more from the Old Testament than the New Testament. Will 'Hebraism' (Grosby, 2021) as distinct from Judaism serve this purpose?

p. 169 Even with the many examples of the convergence of religion and nationality, the 'territorialization' of ecclesiastical administration was, as one should expect, complex and varied. It was qualified by the Cluniac reforms, and most certainly opposed by the papal reformation of Gregory VII (1073–85) and later church councils, as the primacy of the pope was reasserted in opposition to the 'conciliarism' of the Council of Constance. This divergence of religion and nationality merits a few additional comments.

It is possible that either disestablishment or a separation of church and state may be constituent factors of a national tradition, as in the United States. However, figures like Thomas Becket (d. 1170), in his opposition to Henry II, and Thomas More (d. 1535), in his conflict with Henry VIII, do not represent merely the independence of the Church, its law, and teachings; for they did so in defence of the Church as catholic, that is, universal. The opposition of Ultramontanism to, for example, Gallicanism, should not be understood as only in support of papal supremacy in opposition to, in this case, French national tradition. It was that; but it was more: it represents a rejection of any significance of national divisions within the universal Church.

The examples of Becket, More, and Ultramontanism represent assertions of ecclesiastical liberty not of a national church from the state, but of a universal church. They do so because, in keeping with the previously described framework, the spiritual concerns of Christianity—the absolution of sin for the sake of the eternal salvation of the individual—are qualitatively distinct from the territorial kinship of the nation and national state. Although in these and many other similar examples, considerations of power and the church's property were obviously at stake, the significance of the divergence, expressed by the Investiture Controversy, figures like Becket and More, and Ultramontanism, is woefully obscured if simplistically reduced to those considerations.

## Conclusion

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The relation between religion and nationality throughout the history of Europe is so complex and varied that aspects of that relation, deserving of analysis, could not be discussed in this overview. For example, deserving of discussion are: the *Reconquista* of Spain; the bearing of the conflict between Catholics and Huguenots on French nationality in the latter half of the sixteenth century, the conversion of Henry IV (r. 1589–1610) to Catholicism, and the 1598 Edict of Nantes subsequently revoked by Louis XIV (r. 1643–1715); the Thirty Years' War (1618–48) resulting in the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia; the division of the German nation into Lutheran Prussia and Catholic Bavaria; the presence of religious minorities within a nation, for example, Protestants within Poland and obviously Jews throughout Europe; and the contribution of religion to the dismemberment of the former Yugoslavia. There also has been little examination here of numerous theological formulations of the relation, whether convergence, such as Friedrich Schleiermacher's (1991: 235–46) sermon of 1813, 'A Nation's Duty in a War for Freedom', or divergence, as in Karl Barth's (1961: 285–323) subordination, if not rejection, of the 'construct' of nationality to the universal word of God, or a nuanced combination of both as in many papal encyclicals (Grosby, 2016). Also not taken up is the extent to which the ascendance of the measured attachment of civility to the nation makes possible toleration of different religions within a national state.

Instead of examining these and other expressions of the relation, this chapter has emphasized that, while the convergence of religion and nationality is obvious throughout European history, it is necessary not to lose sight of the divergence. To do so is to misunderstand the orientation of religion in general and the universal aspirations of Christianity in particular. Thus, while in this brief examination attention has been drawn to the relation between religion and nationality before the Treaty of Westphalia because that period has generally been neglected by scholars of nations and nationalism, more important has been the reaffirmation of the analytical autonomy of the category 'religion' so as to account for the divergence between religion and nationality. Central to religious belief is the assertion of the existence of a realm beyond human experience and comprehension. However this other-worldly realm is understood, whether, for example, as heaven or divine *agape*, it exists in contrast to human experience and comprehension of the this-worldly territorial kinship of the nation. Just because the nation is constituted by ideas, myths, and symbols, and can exhibit intense bonds of attachment, these constituent factors are not good reasons to fail to distinguish nationality from religion even though it, too, contains ideas, myths, and symbols, and can exhibit intense bonds of attachment. The objects of attachment differ between nationality and religion, and manifestly so for Christianity which, through the love of and for God, unites all of humanity—a unification realized in the other-worldly Kingdom of God.

There is no convincing reason to posit an initial, primary psychic consciousness out of which all forms of human action and relation are derived and related. Being for oneself is never only that, for it is always also being in the (cultural) world. The human mind, qua human, is open to the world. The mind names; it forms images and symbols. This openness to the world, this potential both to create and to be shaped by cultural achievements, finds expression not in a uniform direction or single purpose but in qualitatively different orientations. It appears more likely these distinct orientations arise from, and relations are formed in response to, correspondingly distinct problems encountered by and in life.

One problem is the perennial, primordial significance attributed to the propagation and transmission of life, the response to which is kinship in all its varying forms, including the territorial kinship of the nation. The etymology of that term from the Latin *natio* and the verb *nasci*, 'to be born from', indicates this preoccupation of descent, manifested not only through the family but also through anthropologically, legally, and historically variable structures of territorial relation: city-state, nation, and empire. A different problem is the determination of the place of the life of the individual and his or her society within the world and the universe—a determination that inescapably involves a meaningful evaluation of life itself. This

latter determination and evaluation are the concerns of religion (Grosby, 2018b). That different relations  
p. 171 and their respective institutions come together is historically indisputable; for, otherwise, ↵ societies,  
including nations, would not exist. And it is this coming together of religion and nationality that has been  
briefly examined. Irrespective of the contours of the accommodations of this convergence, tensions persist  
between these relations, for our purposes here, between religion and nationality. Given the diverse  
problems of life, how could it be otherwise?

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### CHAPTER

## 10 Religion and Dictatorship in Europe

Richard Steigmann-Gall

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### Abstract

This chapter explores the intersection of religion and dictatorship after the First World War. It examines the question of institutional relations between church and state, and seeks to explore how these relations shed light on the ideological relationship between religious traditions and fascism in particular. It does this by considering comparative perspectives across Europe, especially with regard to church–state relations but also in terms of politics, ideology, and culture. It goes on to explore the cases of Italian fascism and German Nazism, demonstrating how these regimes have typically been understood, as well as how they perpetuated a distinctive religious politics.

**Keywords:** dictatorship, Nazism, fascism, religion, church–state relations, Europe

**Subject:** History of Religion, Religion

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THE compatibility of religion and politics has been a constant question in European history, all the more so since the French revolutionaries sought to replace a monarch, on his throne by the grace of God, with a secular citizen as the sovereign political power. The nineteenth century saw a variety of accommodations to modernity among the pious Catholics and Protestants of Europe. On the one hand, they decried the increasing secularization of public life and the liberalism of national governments. On the other, they took advantage of new opportunities for religious renewal, not least through previously distrusted technology—train travel, for example, saw renewed tourism to pilgrimage sites—and political parties that catered to an explicitly confessional audience.

These accommodations were fraught affairs, however. As the *ancien régime* faded, the prospect of returning to a pre-modern age of throne and altar grew increasingly distant for the pious Christians of Europe. And while religiosity as such could be maintained through a commitment to churchgoing and other forms of religious practice, the perception of civilizational beleaguerment remained. Thus, it was almost inevitable that the ‘heresies’ of both capitalism and socialism, as well as emancipation, scientific inquiry, and broadened civil liberties would provoke a backlash among those Christians who saw these developments as the rotten fruit borne of secularization. Their turn to dictatorship after the political and cultural crises of the nineteenth century, culminating in the aftermath of the First World War, will be the concern of this chapter.

In the first section, current historiographical tendencies in the writing on religion and dictatorship are explored, as well as some broader themes for interwar Europe as a whole, including the Soviet Union. The second section explores the case of fascist Italy, how it established a template for fascism in Europe more broadly, and the utility of ↪ political religion theory in understanding this tendency. The final section considers the case of Nazi Germany, usually regarded as the ultimate expression of fascist radicality and hostility to established Christianity, compared with other European fascisms.

## Political religions, religious politics

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The question of religion and dictatorship has usually been understood as a matter of church history, rather than cultural, social, or ideological history. In other words, since this relationship has been viewed through the lens of religion as church, as opposed to religion as belief or ‘structure of feeling’, the resultant scholarship has been overdetermined by a Hegelian model of tension between two discrete bodies. In the case of communist dictatorship in the Soviet Union, this is made all the more self-evident by the overt commitment to atheism found among Communist Party and government officials. But even in the interwar dictatorships of Central and Western Europe, the presumption that fascists sought a ‘totalitarian’ transformation of the entire society automatically leads certain scholars to presume that any deeper relationship between established Christian religions and dictatorship will be one of tension and negotiation. Seen from this perspective, questions of cultural connection or ideological origin can easily be overlooked. When any kind of alliance is found between church and state in such scholarship, moral failing or betrayal of the faith-tradition among clergy is axiomatically assumed.

Among scholars of Germany in particular, the ‘churches under Hitler’ genre of historical writing has tended to be a song sung on one note, in which the scholar—frequently a person of faith, morally bewildered by the unsavoury history of their church during the Third Reich—writes as though in dialogue with coreligionists from eighty years ago, instructing them plaintively as to how they ought to have acted. The starting point for such investigations is very often ‘why didn’t they act as they ought to have done?’. The emphasis in such literature is almost always on ‘sins of omission’ committed by Christians who should have known better but—for reasons that usually preserve their innocence, often at the expense of their intelligence—did not. This style of writing then tends to unveil a list of failures, of how churchmen and -women of the era did not live up to the promises of their faith. As with practically no other form of historical writing, the scholars of this genre give themselves licence to write from a primarily moral, and only secondarily empirical, basis. Instead of starting with the actions and words of their historical actors and working from there, they write from the basis of what their historical actors, in their view, *should* have done. This means that church histories of the fascist period are often overwhelmingly written using one of two complementary analytical strategies: first, that the vast majority of clergy and parishioners who supported or acquiesced in fascism were deceived by fascist propaganda; and second, that those Christians who understood their religion ‘correctly’ naturally resisted fascism. The latter strategy is employed frequently, and justifies a great deal of writing about a very few ↪ people: Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–45), and more recently Jacques Maritain (1882–1973), are only the most obvious examples.

Any examination of religion and dictatorship must of course include an examination of the institutional relationship between a state with totalizing claims upon its citizens, and religious bodies which sought to defend the prerogatives of their own totalizing faiths in the face of governments. Since the French Revolution and the rise of liberalism in the nineteenth century, scholars have deemed these governments antagonistic, if not antithetical, to Christian traditions. In this sense theories of totalitarianism and its sibling political religion have done a great deal of work in creating a framework for arguing Christianity’s alleged incompatibility with dictatorship. Leading voices of such a view include Emilio Gentile, Stanley Payne, and the ubiquitous Roger Griffin, whose sheer frequency of publication on this question bespeaks a

hope for victory by repetition (Nelis, Morelli, and Praet, 2015). Their arguments are summarized easily enough. First, that fascism and communism are themselves a form of ‘replacement faith’, demanding total allegiance to a new cult of the state. It follows that Christians who ‘properly’ understood their faith should have resisted this new paganism. Second, that Christianity had no option but to stand in opposition to a system of government that sought to limit freedom of conscience and expression, since it was only through voluntarism that institutional Christianity and the individual Christian could resist sin and decadence in the face of the secularism, individualism, and the growth of civil liberties unleashed in the Age of Revolutions. The individual mattered in the sense that he or she was now a source of validation for a religious establishment that had had its *ancien régime* prerogatives challenged and then stripped away by the constitutional state. Even as the fascist dictatorships stood to rid their societies of that individualism and constitutionalism, the churches—according to this view—had so acclimatized themselves to the liberal order that they now favoured the *right* kind of individualism. This focus on the individual is heavily emphasized in James Chappel’s monograph, *Catholic Modern*, which is the most recent intervention on the question of Catholicism’s relationship to dictatorship (Chappel, 2018). In it, the author contends that Catholicism properly understood was in fact in favour of the separation of church and state, that it welcomed a public sphere as the proper avenue in which to propagate the one true faith, and that anti-fascism was a strong moral and ethical trend within Catholicism.

The problems with Chappel’s interpretation are symptomatic of the apologetics to be found in Griffin’s and Gentile’s work more broadly. Chappel’s most essential argument, that most 1930s Catholics accepted a division between private and public spheres, is limited by his choice of subject: Catholics in Germany and France only. It does not work for European Catholics as a whole. Indeed, mainstream Catholics throughout this decade understood their role as that of perpetuating church–state ties through the conclusion of concordats and through the expansion of Catholic organizations that expressly presented Catholicism as integral to the state and the nation. Though a small number of more ‘progressive’ Catholics did begin to articulate the importance of cultivating civil society in the interwar years, it is a mistake to read this as an acceptance of secularism.

p. 180 Part of the problem with the current state of scholarship on religion and dictatorship is what Jane Caplan describes in a different but related context as the ‘massive imbalance between the intensive, almost obsessive, rereading of a few select intellectuals on the one hand, and the neglect of their alleged ideological confrères on the other’ (Caplan, 1989: 275–6). The endless analysis of chosen individuals who emerged on the ‘right’ side of history, at the expense of their much more numerous coreligionists who did not, lends a false impression of their contemporary influence and impact. A re-examination of these select forefathers reveals, moreover, that their agendas can easily be read tendentiously. Jacques Maritain, for example, who was a sort of French Bonhoeffer, clearly affirmed a more robust civil society which was in effect a way to rechristianize the state, and cultivate what he called ‘integral Catholicism’, in which religion was not just attached to or ancillary to the state, but deeply embedded within it (Chamedes, 2019). Thus any claim that the current cohort of revisionist scholars might make about pious Christians in Europe accommodating themselves to secular democracy runs squarely into the problem of a Christian entanglement with all manner of dictatorships in the 1930s. The more ‘conventional’, non-fascist dictatorships of Europe in that era—the ‘christliche Ständestaat’ of Austria, Francisco Franco’s ‘Army of Christ’ in Spain, António de Oliveira Salazar’s Portugal, and even Józef Piłsudski’s Poland—were all governments motivated precisely by the search for explicitly Catholic politics, social order, and in particular economics. All of them advanced a pro-clerical, anti-secular, anti-communist, and anti-liberal vision. The rush of Catholics from across Europe, even from democratic societies, to fight on Franco’s side in the Spanish Civil War, shows how hated were the secularist policies of the Second Spanish Republic (Keene, 2001). Papal pronouncements up until the ascension of John XXIII (1958–63) fanned the flames, emphasizing the Holy See’s continued commitment to anti-liberal, anti-socialist, and anti-secular modes of governance.

The example of the Soviet dictatorship, by contrast, is one in which a deep-seated, ideologically rooted attempt to suppress the role of the churches in public life is clearly visible. This included cutting off church funds, imprisoning their clergy, and either demolishing ecclesiastical buildings or converting them into museums of atheism. The churches for their part did all they could to survive those attempts. Veronika Smolkin's recent work, *A Sacred Space Is Never Empty*, is a definitive examination of church–state relations throughout the entire history of the USSR. She demonstrates how Soviet authorities construed religion and religiosity as obstacles to the fulfilment of the utopian promise of communism, and hindered the state's effort to achieve political, ideological, and spiritual domination (Smolkin, 2018). The existence of religion or religiosity, even in the private sphere, was deemed unacceptable because it delegitimized Soviet communism's claim to ethical authority and moral truth. State strategies to establish domination included: the closure of churches and appropriation of life cycle events which were put into effect immediately after the Revolution to reduce clerical authority (Stalin's 'militant atheism'); a focus on the achievements of man through science as a mechanism to refute the existence of God and combat superstition (Khrushchev's 'scientific atheism'); and the development of state rituals in an effort to address spiritual needs otherwise met through religious ritual. The use of any particular strategy varied over time as a function of shifting priorities, lack of consensus among those with authority, external events, the ability of the church to adapt, and the willingness or lack thereof of the Communist Party to compromise ideological purity in order to achieve other desired ends, such as economic security and political stability.

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Quite apart from this, efforts to produce Soviet citizens who internalized both communism and atheism were compromised due to the absence of a unified understanding among Soviet political leadership of what constituted religion and atheism. Specifically, the internal logic of the Soviet narrative regarding religion—that it would eventually die out—was ultimately ruptured due on the one hand to the persistence of popular religiosity and on the other to the abandonment of official atheism, both in the Soviet Union and Soviet-style societies in Eastern Europe more broadly during the Cold War. Thus, in contrast to fascist or other rightist dictatorships, with Soviet-style societies totalitarianism theory does in fact make sense, insofar as the state attempted to create a 'replacement faith' in a coercive environment which lacked a true public sphere.

This brings the argument back to the theory of political religion, which among a cadre of conservative scholars is still a deeply tempting category of analysis through which to understand the intersection of religion and dictatorship. At its most elemental, this theory suggests that the form of twentieth-century dictatorships counted for more than the content; style is emphasized over substance. A militarized society, one-party state, suppression of the public sphere, a supreme leader with some degree of charisma or at least personality cult—these are the focus of attention. By contrast, the different policies these regimes pursued, their contrasting ideologies, and what their societies were like in practice—are given secondary consideration (Maier, 2007; Gregor, 2012). Like totalitarianism theory, political religion maintains that atomized 'mass man', deprived of the moral compass of *Gemeinschaft* (community) and hurled into the anomie of *Gesellschaft* (society) found a *Gemeinschaft* once again, this time writ large. Compounding this alleged development (according to these theorists), the modern European experienced a Nietzschean 'death of God', leaving him or her dechristianized and therefore vulnerable to blind enthusiasms.

Like totalitarianism theory, political religion emphasizes fascist form (the hypnotic power of a new charismatic faith) over content (the message of that religion and to whom it appealed). Among the original representatives of this view were the German conservatives Eric Voegelin and Gerhard Ritter, who both argued that particularly Nazism had been a moral disease originating in the Enlightenment, and who both prescribed a simple 'return' to Christian values as the best antidote. This argument obviated the need to seek the social roots of Nazism's popularity—thereby refuting suggestions that Hitler was more than an aberration in the course of German history. This 'moral dimension' of post-war scholarship, as Ian Kershaw calls it, served as the historical counterpart of the theory of totalitarianism, which was then being developed

by political scientists such as Hannah Arendt (Kershaw, 2000: 19–26). By pointing to instances of Christian alterity to Nazism, this scholarship helped to erect a potent symbol of national regeneration, the *Stunde Null*—thereby refuting ↵ those scholars of the victorious powers who claimed that Nazism was a disease encompassing *all* Germans.

Given the profoundly political character of fascism, it is less interesting and ultimately less fruitful to know whether it can be qualified as a religion than to identify its relationship to religions that had long been part of the societies that became fascist. And here the same scholarship that prioritizes style over content can often make telling if frequently inadvertent references to a substantive relationship as well. Turning to the Italian historiography, this is reflected in Mabel Berezin's work. On the one hand, she suggests that in fascist Italy 'everyone participated in Catholic practices that were independent of doctrine or belief and shaped Italian fascist and public consciousness' (Berezin, 1997: 51). The religious form is emphasized here; Berezin speaks of a 'fascist transposition' of Catholic idioms, such as the catechism, which aided the forming of fascist political culture. On the other hand, however, Berezin points to a substantive connection to Catholicism. She speaks of ideological 'affinities', especially with regard to fascist social theory: 'In a direct borrowing from *Rerum Novarum*, corporations, fascist unions that encompassed the entire workforce, were the organizing vehicles that concretized the state-individual relation' (Berezin, 1997: 60). Admittedly Berezin argues this was simply a 'borrowing'—Catholicism in her view was a pool of ideas to be siphoned off, not the ontological root of fascism per se. But the 'borrowing' is nonetheless comprehensive. Elsewhere she points out that 'as an ideology, fascism was anti-democratic, anti-liberal, anti-socialist, and anti-Masonic' (Berezin, 1997: 62)—all recognizably Catholic components of the platform.

Did something other than a 'borrowing' take place? Rather than 'political religion', is there something that could instead be called 'religious politics', whereby a political movement promotes the temporal teachings of an established religion? While a theory of fascism as 'religious politics' has yet to be developed, such a concept would place far greater emphasis on the content of a religion's message—particularly with regards to the social order—than the form of that religion's ritual. It would emphasize the ways in which fascists, as participants in a democratic process they ultimately sought to destroy from within, carved out a constituency of particular religious interests.

For Christians of Central and Western Europe after the First World War, as indeed before it, politics was often understood in the traditional sense of party politics. But more than that, the goal was the creation of great politics, a politics that would rise above parliaments and governing coalitions—the give and take of liberal compromise—in favour of a greater communal good based on the needs of the whole. A politics of the soul, of higher calling, of selflessness. In this conception it was easy for politically active Catholics to find enemies among liberals, socialists and others who were not part of this community and not practising members of the Christian faiths. For many of them, the new order which arose out of the seismic upheavals of 1918 was built by Freemasons and Jews, whose powers were fulfilled in the secular, 'un-Christian' League of Nations (Dagnino, 2017). Liberalism and Marxism were both condemned for lacking the correct morality and infecting the public sphere. Working-class agitation, calls for unionization ↵ and strike action, and even more radically, calls for the seizure and redistribution of property, were all seen as manifestations of a sinful materialism. Fascists came to precisely the same conclusions, basing their animosities and their aspirations on the same social and cultural fears and concerns.

There were, especially in eastern Central Europe, particular regimes which went one step further to merge religion institutionally with fascism into 'clerical fascism'. These cases are not usually thought to be autonomously occurring dictatorships, since their existence can largely be dated to the emergence of Germany as the geopolitical hegemon. Croatia's Ustasha movement would likely not have gained ascendance were it not for the military conquest of Yugoslavia by the Axis powers. But once installed, it perpetuated a variety of fascism which fully incorporated Catholicism in word and deed, and was also murderous in its anti-Semitism, as well as its sectarian hatred of Serbs, whose one pivotal difference from



Croats was their religion. Even before the war, the annexation of Czech lands by the Germans led to the creation of a new client state of Slovakia. Its leader was a priest, Jozef Tiso (1887–1947), who emerged from the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire a convinced nationalist, and for whom love of nation and love of Christ did not exist in tension, but in synthesis. One recent biographer believes that Tiso was not a dyed-in-the-wool anti-Semite; that Tiso only came to his anti-Semitism through informal pressure exerted from the vastly larger neighbour sitting atop little Slovakia (Ward, 2014). And yet the record reveals a man who was consistent in his hatred for Jews, regarding them as bringers of ‘filth, disorder and fraud’ and who insisted publicly that ‘we are the slaves of the Jews’ (Ward, 2014: 43). Words were matched by deeds; against a view that he was merely bending with the prevailing winds of much larger continental powers, Tiso assisted the German Army in putting down an anti-fascist uprising in 1944, when the inexorable march of the Red Army into Eastern Europe was clear to all. Tiso also exhibited a classic fascist love of war as ‘morally purifying’, a ‘fiery hammer [which] wrought together an entire nation into one camp, one heart, one spirit’, the product of ‘divine providence’ (Ward, 2014: 33).

## Fascist Italy: from antagonism to acclamation

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With respect to Italy, part of the confusion over the antecedents of fascist ideology and their presumed antagonism to religion has to do with the self-professed leftism of many of its originators. Benito Mussolini (1883–1945) famously started out as a Marxist within the Italian Socialist Party. Even as he began to call for a glorious ‘hygiene’ of combat on the eve of the First World War to instil nationalist pride into his politics, he was still seemingly making clear his antagonism to the establishment in all its forms—most particularly throne and altar. The question of whether German fascism was not also leftist ↵ in its origins is demonstrated in the apparently leftist nature of the Party Program of 1924, written by men like Gregor Strasser and Gottfried Feder, who heavily emphasized the ‘socialism’ of National Socialism with their calls for property confiscation and nationalization. But whatever putative leftism there was in early Nazism, it was not nearly as evident as it was in the Italian case, or those such as Spain or France, where syndicalism has been deemed by Zeev Sternhell among others as the lodestar of proto-fascist intellectuals such as Georges Sorel (1847–1922) (Sternhell, 1995). In contrast, other ideologues of the far right, like the royalist and social Catholic Charles Maurras (1868–1952), are deemed ineligible for membership in the proto-fascist elite because they were insufficiently ‘revolutionary’.

Such a conclusion can only be arrived at through the contrivance of the scholar-gatekeeper who takes it upon him or herself to determine which intellectual will be anointed as ‘forefather’ and which not, based on arbitrarily chosen criteria. That none of these forefathers described themselves as ‘fascist’ means that the scholar is free to choose his or her favourite ancestor. This keeps such scholars within the realm of intellectual history, leading them to search for whichever quotes most closely overlap with the individual scholar’s understanding of what fascism really is—itself a contentious subject. What such investigations frequently ignore is whether or how these ideas were applied in fascist movements on the ground, and in fascist governments that took power and implemented their agendas. If the practices of fascist states did not always align with the ideas of selected fascist intellectual progenitors, this speaks perhaps to the failure of such scholars to identify correctly which *fin-de-siècle* personalities were the real forerunners of fascism, rather than to the failures of fascists to live up to their own word once in power.

An additional source of confusion is the invective against the ‘bourgeois order’ frequently heard among early fascists, which in the ears of some scholars includes bourgeois piety. It is important to keep in mind that the part of the bourgeois social order that fascists detested was one associated with liberal democracy and constitutionalism—the same values which the Christian churches (and particularly Catholicism) had long railed against. ‘Bourgeois’ in this sense did not carry the classic leftist connotations, but was rather synonymous with decadence and cosmopolitanism; that is, not piety but apostasy. Fascist concern with

protecting a traditionalist understanding of the social, economic, and cultural power of a middle class committed to property ownership, community values (in the form of corporatism), and gender order (in the form of pronatalism), further diminishes the claim that fascists were 'anti-bourgeois' in any real sense. What they most emphatically hated was a constitutional order which both defended and further cultivated a public sphere, and a marketplace of ideas which gave an opening to secular worldviews that could rival Christian tradition, cultivate materialism and socialism, and foster an acceptance and toleration of differing points of view. All of the above were anathema to movements which proclaimed the One Truth and viewed rival worldviews as dangerous untruths to be defeated and destroyed. In this sense, fascist dictatorships not only mimicked the style of the 'mother church' which political religion theory spills so much ink emphasizing—the ceremonies, public choreography that included night rallies, and an ethos of missionizing zeal—but also propagated the social, economic, and cultural ideologies of that church. Their claim to 'totality', in other words, at no point addressed the question of what those dictatorships stood for, what the 'fascist paradise' was to achieve, or what fascist states would do with their power. By contrast, Soviet-style totalitarianism did, in fact, seek to replace Christian social and economic philosophies with an atheist alternative. One, moreover, that upended the social order through the complete reorganization of property, the destruction of bourgeois social relations, and the overturning of the gender order, especially with regard to abortion rights.

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As the template for fascisms elsewhere, the Italian case overdetermines the scholarly presumption that fascism in its origins was antagonistic to religion. Other fascist movements throughout Catholic Europe—Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Slovakia, Hungary, Portugal, and Spain—all demonstrated an unambiguous element of Christian identity and thought, even where in some cases antagonism to Christian institutions was expressed. By contrast, it was harder for a right-wing politics to emerge in a country like Italy, where liberalism so clearly set the tone for national identity over against a Papacy which told newly created Italians that they could choose country or God, but not both. Nineteenth-century conservatism across Europe was closely tied to preservation of the clerical order. While German and British conservatism could comfortably reside alongside nationalism—eventually even for Catholics in the German case—such was not the case in Italy, where religious Catholics were told that love of nation ran against God's will. For pious conservative Italians, entering into the liberal, parliamentary politics of the new state was a much more fraught exercise than for German or British conservatives. The circumstances of Italian political life after 1860 made it practically impossible for leaders and governments to brand themselves as conservative even when they were. In this sense, fascism's emergence among those who self-identified as 'leftists' in the Italian case was almost predestined to fill the enormous gap left by the political right's absence from Italian politics. As Roland Sarti has rather aptly put it, 'Since self-confessed conservative Fascists were rarer than Venetian gondoliers in the Gulf of Naples, we must investigate the question by looking beyond the realm of stated intentions' (Blinkhorn, 1990: 17).

Mussolini had grown up politically as a strident but ideologically fickle Marxist. On the one hand he denounced belief in God almost as vehemently as he denounced the liberal bourgeoisie. He would attack fellow socialists for any tolerance they exhibited towards religious members, going so far as to call for expulsion from the Italian Socialist Party anyone who had received a religious marriage. On the other, he quickly outed himself as a 'heretic' among Marxists—much like Georges Sorel and other anointed fascist progenitors did before him—whose departure from the leftist fold would lead him a few years later into striking concordance with Catholic social theory on a range of cultural, social, and economic issues. It was for broadly ideological reasons, in other words, and not just out of pragmatic concern, that Mussolini found himself drawing closer to the Catholic orbit. Under the Lateran Pacts of 1929, Mussolini granted independent statehood to the Vatican City in exchange for the Catholic Church being recognized as Italy's state religion. The original sin of the Italian state's birth under liberal auspices finally received absolution in the view of millions of Catholics. The Church regained authority over marriage; Catholicism could be taught in all secondary schools; birth control and Freemasonry were banned; and the clergy received state funding.

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Pope Pius XI (1922–39) praised Mussolini, and the official Catholic newspaper pronounced ‘Italy has been given back to God and God to Italy’ (D’Agostino, 2004: 198). Most Catholic opinion outside of Italy confirmed the opinion that fascism was regarded as inherently, intrinsically Christian.

It was after the Accords that Mussolini’s ‘totalitarianism’ could first be perceived. But it revealed itself to be entirely a matter of institutional rivalry, not ideological opposition. Mussolini insisted that the Church was subordinated to the state, referring to Catholicism as originally a minor sect that ‘had spread beyond Palestine only because grafted onto the organization of the Roman empire’ (Smith, 1982: 162).

Simultaneously, the fascist state grew increasingly antagonistic to Catholic Action (*Azione Cattolica*), the Church’s ancillary youth organization, which was viewed as a rival to fascist youth groups. An independent Catholic press was also attacked, as Catholic newspapers were confiscated. However, this was not the state suddenly unfurling long-hidden anti-Christian colours; rather, it was acting on the fascist presumption that the Church had recognized the institutional supremacy of the state. This was not the case, and by 1932, Mussolini was publicly reconciled with the pope, taking care in the process to exclude from the fascist press any photos of himself kneeling before or showing deference to the pope. Ruffled institutional feathers were soon smoothed over. The pope, for his part, referred to Mussolini as ‘a man sent by Providence’. Whatever totalitarian dangers the fascist state represented to Christianity, for these few years after the Lateran Pacts they were not to be found in the anti-communism, anti-liberalism, nationalism, corporatism, pronatalism, or imperialist expansionism of fascist ideology and practice. And as David Kertzer points out, on a personal level, Mussolini and Pius shared basic political and social values. Both hated parliamentary democracy; neither believed in freedom of speech or freedom of association; both saw communism as a grave threat; both thought Italy was mired in crisis and that the prior, liberal political system was beyond salvation (Kertzer, 2015).

Even the introduction of anti-Semitic laws in 1938, often seen as a symptom of Nazi Germany’s increasing influence over fascist Italy, was not beyond the pale for the Catholic Church. In the face of post-war revisionism which depicted the Catholic Church as a staunch opponent of fascist and ‘pagan’ anti-Semitism, Kertzer has revealed just how widespread a deeply entrenched anti-Semitism was among the princes of the Church, especially among Jesuits. Father Pietro Tacchi Venturi, the primary mediator in the relations between Pius and Mussolini, saw Jews as the principal agents, along with Marxists and Freemasons, in a worldwide plot against the Church. The antisemitic laws of 1938 copied the Nazis’ Nuremberg Laws by applying even to those Jews who had converted to Catholicism or had been married in Catholic ceremonies. As a reassurance to the fascist state, Venturi authored an agreement between the Church and the regime, in which he promised the silence of the Church regarding the anti-Semitic laws (Kertzer, 2015: 86–9).

One can wryly observe that Mussolini’s earlier socialist denunciation of the Catholic Church for ‘its authoritarianism and refusal to allow freedom of thought’ (Smith, 1982: 15) ended up being a condemnation of his own future self—yet another marker of the ways in which the turn to fascism brought with it an acclamation of Catholic Christianity. On every relevant political, economic, social, or cultural issue, there was a startling overlap between Catholic doctrine and fascist practice. This was most obviously evident in the complete overlap in enemies: liberalism, communism, socialism, parliamentary democracy, Jews, Masons, feminism, and anarchism. This was not just a case of coincidental parallel ideologies, but rather of a homology in which fascism in this context is to be understood as a Catholic politics. This is equally revealed in the overlap in aspirations, in ‘positives’, which was no less complete: the quest for order, discipline, authority, and hierarchy; obedience and submission of the individual to the will of the community; the quest for an organicist ‘third way’ between capitalism and communism, one that would seek to reconcile industrial and urban modernity to agrarian wholesomeness; and the replacement of a secular notion of society with an integralist corporatism, in which worker radicalism and agitation against the employer would be replaced with paternalistic reconciliation and the end of unions. Last but not least,

the heretical 'new woman' would be replaced with a submissive woman who might display fitness, health, and vitality in public, but would be committed to marriage, family, reproduction, modesty, and morality in private.

Even in the realm of nationalism and empire, the Catholicity of fascism would reveal itself. Mussolini's hyper-nationalism, while first emerging in his days as a Marxist, would mark his departure from the left towards the right. Nationalism was never an inherently secular value, since for many pious Christians God found his will expressed in the history and conduct of nations. And if it could be shown that the nation was a unit of communal organization pleasing to God, as had long been concluded in Protestant societies, there was every reason to expect the Catholic Church to view nationalism as not just benign to its own interests, but actively amenable to them. Even the place of the state in Catholic thought had evolved. Leo XIII's much-discussed Papal Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) had warned of the dangers of the liberal state having a hand in the social organization of Catholics, declaring instead a preference to see the corporatist model go into operation outside of the state's control. Expressing its paternalistic concern for the urban worker, the Vatican's critique against capitalism in favor of a more communal social organization gestured towards a 'third way' between Marxism and capitalism that, while entirely traditionalistic in its application of Christian philosophy to economics, seemed nonetheless amenable to some socialists in their own aspirations to building a social base.

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In 1931, in the middle of fascism's ascendance, Pius XI issued an Encyclical *Quadragesimo anno*, which after the rise of Bolshevism in the Soviet Union took a markedly different approach, now favouring the state as the best defence over a Marxist notion of societal transformation and class struggle. Any notion of redistributive economic justice would take place only in subservience to the sanctity of private property. The nominal syndicalist organization of workers within the Italian Fascist state was lauded, with a clear explanation that workers' strikes could not be permitted. With good reason, Catholic dictatorships in Austria, Portugal, Spain, and even Mussolini's Italy could claim to be inspired by Catholic social teaching as exhibited in *Quadragesimo anno*. In the nineteenth century, Leo XIII had accepted the existence of classes and hoped that Catholic charity might lead to social peace; by contrast, Pius XI argued that 'first and foremost' the goal of the state was to abolish class conflict—far beyond the scope of the state as laid out in *Rerum Novarum*. In *Quadragesimo anno*, by contrast, the state was urged not just to protect, but to establish and create. And while Leo XIII had made no reference to any particular social or economic approach, Pius XI did: in passages of *Quadragesimo anno* that he wrote himself, he endorsed Mussolini's fascist economics (Chappel, 2018: 79). Again, this is not to deny that conflicts would arise between the totalitarian prerogatives of the fascist state and the totalizing claims of the Vicar of Christ. While the Vatican may have chaffed at the fascist state seizing their prerogatives in organizing Catholic associational life, it nonetheless recognized the source of fascist social theory as resting within its own bosom. Here again can be found a perfect display of institutional rivalry caused precisely by ideological proximity.

## German Nazism: anti-Christian?

Contrary to its reputation for ‘paganism’ and other forms of anti-Christian hostility, the question of Nazi Germany was not nearly so fraught. From the beginning, National Socialism had maintained that it upheld a ‘positive Christianity’ that would heal the confessional wound between Protestants and Catholics in a shared political, social, and economic agenda. Unlike Mussolini, the ‘leftists’ of German Nazism had never been of a Marxist type, had never belonged to the Social Democratic or Communist parties, and had indeed pronounced their detestation of atheist Marxism from the start. The ‘socialism’ of their National Socialism had always been closer to the eventual corporatism of the Italian fascists, upholding the necessity of class inequality and the need for a socially minded ‘peoples’ community’, than to syndicalism or any heretical departure from Marxism, à la Sorel. While some of the early leading Nazis, particularly Alfred Rosenberg (1893–1946), loudly pronounced their intention to create a new neopagan faith that would rival and then replace Christianity, this in fact always remained a fringe element of the Nazi movement, never entering the Party’s mainstream—even if Rosenberg attempted to make this so and even if a generation of post-war historians proclaimed him successful in so doing. While he did not join the Catholic condemnation of Rosenberg’s book *Myth of the Twentieth Century* (1930), Hitler was well known within the Party for his rejection of Rosenberg’s pagan ideas, which the Nazi Party’s official publisher, Eher Verlag, refused to publish. Even near the end of the Third Reich, when Nazi hatred of Christianity is frequently alleged to have experienced full blossom, Hitler retained his dismissive attitude, stating privately:

‘I must insist that Rosenberg’s “Myth of the Twentieth Century” is not to be regarded as an expression of the official doctrine of the Party... . It is interesting to note that comparatively few of the older members of the Party are to be found among the readers of Rosenberg’s book, and that the publishers had, in fact, great difficulty in disposing of the first edition’.

(Quoted in Steigmann-Gall, 2003: 257)

While the Nazi Party and then Nazi State would earn a well-deserved reputation for anticlericalism—ironically just as church and state under Mussolini were strengthening their synthesis—it is important to keep two issues in mind: first, this anticlericalism was never conjoined with a larger assault on Christianity. And second, that the Nazis distinguished in the choice of their anticlerical targets between the Catholic minority and the Protestant majority. Distinctions were frequently made in the Nazi elite between the internationalism of Catholicism, its undermining effect upon the quest for ‘race purity’, its ‘softness’ and appeal to meekness on the one hand, and the more aggressive, ‘masculine’ ethos of Protestantism on the other, which Hitler himself believed was the ‘natural religion’ of the German.

In *Mein Kampf* (1925), the nearest thing in Nazism to a foundational text, Hitler gave no indication of being an atheist or agnostic like young Mussolini, or even of believing only in a remote, rationalist deity. On the contrary, he referred continually to a providential, active deity. Whereas repeated references to a vague providential force may bear little resemblance to belief in the biblical God, in *Mein Kampf* Hitler intones more than a naturalist pantheism devoid of Christian content. It was in the question of race and race purity where Hitler most frequently intoned such a God: it was, in his view, the duty of Germans ‘to put an end to the constant and continuous original sin of racial poisoning, and to give the Almighty Creator beings such as He Himself created’ (Hitler, 1971: 405). Even as Hitler elsewhere made reference to an anthropomorphized ‘Nature’, and the laws of Nature which humanity must follow, he also revealed his belief that these were divine laws ordained by God: ‘The folkish-minded man, in particular, has the sacred duty, each in his own denomination, of making people stop just talking superficially of God’s will, and actually fulfill God’s will, and not let God’s word be desecrated. For God’s will gave men their form, their essence and their abilities. Anyone who destroys His work is declaring war on the Lord’s creation, the divine will’ (Hitler, 1971: 562).

The reference to God as the Lord of Creation, and the necessity of obeying 'His' will, reveal a standard Christian conception.

Other sources of Hitler's religious views in this period confirm a Christian dimension to his thinking. As early as 1919 Hitler sketched out his basic worldview in an unpublished manuscript. The first section was on the Bible, under which heading Hitler noted: 'Monumental History of Mankind—Idealism–Materialism: p. 190 Nothing without a cause—history makes men ... the children of God and men'. He concluded from these ruminations the first result: 'purification of the Bible—that which is consistent with our spirit. Second result: critical examination of the remainder' (Steigmann-Gall, 2003: 27). This 'purification' is almost certainly an allusion to the Old Testament, which others in the Nazi elite, such as Dietrich Eckart (1868–1923) and Artur Dinter (1876–1948), claimed had to be removed from the Christian canon owing to its origins in Judaism. While such a position brings into question the theological soundness of Hitler's religious views, the idea of expunging the Old Testament from Christianity was not simply a Nazification of Christianity. None other than Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930), one of the leading Protestant theologians of the twentieth century, had conceived such an idea when the Nazi movement was still to be born.

In a speech delivered in front of a Nazi audience in April 1922, Hitler made a more explicit reference to Christianity, referring to Jesus as 'the true God'. He made it plain that he regarded Christ's struggle as direct inspiration for his own. For Hitler, Jesus was not just one archetype among others, but 'our greatest Aryan leader'. While emphasizing Jesus' human qualities, Hitler in these instances also alluded to his divinity. At a Christmas celebration given by the Munich branch of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) in December 1926, Hitler maintained that the movement's goal was to 'translate the ideals of Christ into deeds'. The movement would complete 'the work which Christ had begun but could not finish' (Steigmann-Gall, 2003: 27). Such sentiments were not just for public occasions; as one of his closest confidants revealed, Hitler would reiterate these opinions behind closed doors (Turner, 1985).

After Hitler took power, Nazi Germany's first foreign policy success seemed only to confirm the basically 'positive Christian' comportment of the Nazis as promised in Point 24 of their Party Platform. The agreeing of a concordat with the Vatican came to the same essential conclusion as the Lateran Pacts had with the Italian state; namely, that the anticlericalism aimed against Catholics during the Second Reich, in particular during the *Kulturkampf*, was to be abandoned by the state definitively, and that state funding for the institution of the Church as well as legal protection of Catholic religious practice would be guaranteed. In exchange, the Catholic Church would recognize the legitimacy of the Nazi State and its dictatorial ambitions. The Center Party, the official voice of political Catholicism in Germany since unification and a part of most ruling coalitions of the Weimar Republic, was to disband itself—which it duly did, after voting to grant Hitler dictatorial powers in the notorious Enabling Act of 1933. Catholic youth organizations would prove a point of tension—just as they did with Italian fascism—but the essential rights of Catholics to exist qua Catholics, equal to Protestants in their national and indeed racial belonging, was affirmed. The anticlerical animus of certain Nazis grew the longer the regime endured, most notably when leaders of the SS demonstrably took part in a church-leaving (*Kirchenaustritt*) movement in the latter years of the 1930s. Even then, however, the institutional integrity of the Catholic Church was never violated. Taxes continued to be collected by the Nazi State, for both the Catholic and Protestant churches, until the very end of the war. And within Germany not a single church was closed or clergyman arrested, unless their sermon was a direct p. 191 challenge to the authority of the Nazi State. Even then—as was evidenced by the denunciation of the so-called 'Euthanasia Campaign' by Catholic Bishop August von Galen—the Nazis treated the upper clergy of both confessions with extreme caution. Nazi occupation policy in Poland and the Soviet Union displayed a much more stringent attitude towards the churches and has led several historians to presume this showed the Nazis unfurling their true, anti-Christian colours. Such arguments tend to overlook, however, that clergy were persecuted as cultural carriers of national identity and were feared as future leaders of potential

nationalist resistance movements. This is particularly the case in Poland, where Catholic priests were killed not for being Catholics, but for being Polish—just like poets, politicians, and professors.

## Conclusion

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The political, social, and cultural fallout from the marriage of religion and dictatorship in Europe would not be felt until the 1960s, when a generational shift led to the rejection of the cultural and political choices that had been made by parents in the 1930s and 1940s. At the end of the war, countries like Germany, which were held accountable by the conquering powers, were able to fashion a new narrative that Christians had been opposed to, or even resisted, the Nazis. The *Stunde Null* myth was a part of this narrative and was promoted by some of the very same scholars, such as Gerhard Ritter, who had previously welcomed the Nazi movement. The Western occupying powers were receptive to this narrative, particularly the United States authorities, who went so far as to spare any clergyman in the American occupation zone from denazification. Select individuals such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Niemöller, churchmen who faced down Nazi barbarity, became the focus of inordinate attention and were elevated as standard-bearers of normative behaviour at the expense of their religious confrères who had proclaimed Nazism to indeed be a Christian politics, but who unsurprisingly fell into an embarrassed silence once the war was over. A similar process pertains in France regarding Maritain, who is the focus of similar morally therapeutic analysis. As for the Italians, there was a very minimal defascistization process, compared to the much more thorough German experience. This can be explained by the timely abandonment of the Germans by the Italian authorities in the liberated zone, the antagonism of the Nazi state to the Vatican (never turned into action, it should be remembered), and the presumption that the declaration of a republic would in itself morally cleanse the nation. Other Western dictatorships, such as Portugal and Spain, collapsed of their own entropy, while Christian-authoritarian regimes in Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Croatia were all removed from power by the expansion of the Soviet sphere of influence. Austria, Germany, Italy, and France saw Catholics previously favourable to dictatorship taking cover under newly created Christian democratic parties. It is a credit to the founders of these parties that they were heartfelt in their attempt to conciliate religion and democracy—even if it meant more than twenty years of quietly agreed historical amnesia among their churchgoing electorate.

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CHAPTER

## 11 Christian Democracy and Europe

Kees van Kersbergen

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### Abstract

Christian democracy is the heir to the Catholic confessional parties that emerged in the late nineteenth century. It is a Western European phenomenon promoting a particular social policy, aimed at the moderation of social conflicts especially between social classes. With a distinctive ideology and by appealing to religion and religious values, Christian democracy became broadly attractive to all sections of the electorate. Christian democracy was also a key driver of international cooperation and integration, and particularly influential in the formation of the European Union. Yet the overall picture of Christian democratic parties in recent decades has been one of decline. Secularization plays an obvious role here. That said, there is still some room for political movements to respond actively and strategically to changes in their environment. The chapter concludes by discussing some future options for these parties.

**Keywords:** [Christian democracy](#), [Catholic confessional parties](#), [Western Europe](#), [European Union](#), [secularization](#)

**Subject:** [History of Religion](#), [Religion](#)

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‘CHRISTIAN’, ‘democracy’, and ‘Europe’ are the three terms in this chapter’s title, whose meaning and interrelationships need definition and explanation. To which religion or denomination does the adjective ‘Christian’ refer? How is ‘Christian democracy’ different from liberal democracy, if at all? Are Christian parties, such as those in Scandinavia, different from Christian democratic parties? How did Christian democracy reconcile Christianity with democracy? Is Europe a geographical, cultural, or political marker? Or is Europe short for European integration and the European Union (EU)? To what extent have Christian democratic parties contributed to European integration and the development of the EU?

This chapter starts with a short clarification of concepts and positions. It continues with an analysis of confessional party formation, before offering an account of how Catholics gradually learned to reconcile their religious inspiration with the secular demands of liberal-democratic politics. The next section presents the movement’s intellectual roots to explain how it became both Christian and democratic. The remaining sections deal with the distinctiveness of Christian democracy, its position towards Europe and its

impact on the EU, before turning to the more speculative question of whether there is a future for Christian democracy in Europe or not. A short conclusion draws the threads together.

## Preliminary clarifications

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From the outset, it is important to clarify the following. First, even though Protestants integrated into Christian democracy immediately after the Second World War in Germany and—much later (1980)—in the Netherlands, Christian democracy is the heir to the *Catholic* parties that emerged in Western Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century and were active more or less until 1939. The crucial difference between the pre-war Catholic parties and post-war Christian democracy is that the latter dissociated itself more fully from the Roman Catholic Church, unconditionally embraced democracy, and opened up both to other denominations and to secular influences.

Second, Christian democracy is a *distinctive* political movement (Van Kersbergen, 1994; Kselman and Buttigieg, 2003; Van Hecke and Gerard, 2004). Jan-Werner Müller (2013) and Carlo Invernizzi-Accetti (2019) set out to define Christian democracy exclusively in terms of a movement facing particular challenges (especially how to reconcile Christianity with modern democracy). However, there are other elements that are not only specific to Christian democracy, but also key to understanding its impact on ‘Europe’. The fact that it is difficult to delineate a political movement unambiguously—which is always the case, no matter the party—does not imply that it is impossible.

Third, Christian democracy until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 was fundamentally a *Western European* phenomenon. Admittedly, Christian democracy has been a political force to reckon with in some countries in Latin America, but in terms of electoral support and political influence, these parties pale in comparison to the Western European examples. And because of the radically different political cleavages and opportunity structures in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe, Christian democratic parties did not arise here—not even in Catholic Poland—or, if they emerged, remained relatively small and insignificant. Some of the more successful parties in the region, such as Fidesz—the Hungarian Civic Alliance, make explicit reference to Christianity as a source of inspiration and a cultural marker, and nationally and internationally affiliate with the Christian democratic party family, but these parties are very different from their Western European counterparts.

The final clarification is that there is no such thing as ‘Europe’. In this chapter, the term ‘Europe’ effectively refers to the EU. Economically, culturally, religiously, and politically, there are huge differences between Western, Central, Eastern, Northern, and Southern Europe, but only in the continental European countries of Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Switzerland did Christian democracy emerge and thrive for a significant period after 1945 (Frey, 2009; Kalyvas and Van Kersbergen, 2010). Christian democratic parties have also been key actors in the process of European integration and the EU’s institutional development. Table 11.1 gives an overview of these parties and their most recent electoral performance.

# Catholic confessional party formation

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The emergence of Catholic confessional parties—the forerunners of Christian democracy in Western Europe—poses a puzzle, because the Church and conservative politicians originally opposed the political mobilization of lay Catholics. Stathis Kalyvas (1996) offers a convincing solution to this puzzle. In his analysis, confessional party formation was the contingent and unintended outcome of the strategic moves made by the Catholic Church and conservative political elite in response to the liberal anticlericalism of the late nineteenth century (e.g. Bismarck’s *Kulturkampf*).

**Table 11.1** Christian democratic parties in Western Europe (names and latest election result).

Country	Party	Latest result (per cent)
Austria	Österreichische Volkspartei, ÖVP	31.4 (2017)
Belgium	Christelijke Volkspartij, CVP; since 2001: Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams, CD&V	11.6 (2014)
	Parti Social-Chrétien, PSC; since 2002: Centre Démocrate Humaniste)	5 (2014)
Germany	Christlich-Demokratische Union, CDU	30.2 (2017)
	Christlich-Soziale Union, CSU	7 (2017)
Italy	Democrazia Cristiana (until 1994); since 1994: various parties merged into the Unione dei Democratici Cristiani e Democratici di Centro, UDC; in 2018, the UDC joined Noi con l’Italia	1.3 (2018)
Luxembourg	Chrëschtlech Sozial Vollekspartei, CSV	28.31 (2018)
Netherlands	Christen-Democratisch Appèl, CDA	12.4 (2017)
Switzerland	Christlichdemokratische Volkspartei der Schweiz	29.4 (2015)

Source: Adapted from Frey (2009) and Kalyvas and Van Kersbergen (2010); recent data from Nordsieck (n.d.).

The Church feared that the creation of mass organizations of lay Catholics would reduce its control over its members. In particular, mass mobilization threatened to undermine Catholic unity, which the strictly hierarchical and centralized structure of decision-making of the Church had hitherto guaranteed. If the lower clergy and lay Catholics were allowed to organize in various interest organizations, they would become too independent from the episcopate. The Church therefore initially forcefully opposed Catholic mass mobilization, hoping to moderate the liberal assault on its position in other ways. However, the liberal attacks on the Church’s role and power in society did not abate but instead intensified, and this forced the Church to reconsider its strategy. Because attempts to compromise with the liberals failed, the Church started to promote mass counter-mobilization of Catholics to defend its influential position, particularly in education, but was reluctant to allow party formation. Political participation of lay Catholics would involve substantial costs: it would further weaken the bond between the Church and its members; it implied a loss of

control; and it increased the risk of an even stronger backlash against Catholicism, because Catholic mobilization effectively politicized religion.

p. 197 The conservative political elite, also struggling to find a way to stop the liberal advance, wished to continue its participation in politics. The conservatives, however, lacked the resources and the salient issues necessary for mass mobilization. Moreover, mobilization was deemed too costly. Ironically, the liberal attack against the Church itself created the opportunity for avoiding these costs. Religion was potentially an electoral magnet and the organizational powers of the Church could be utilized as a political resource. The conservatives, however, also did not favour the formation of Catholic parties, because they feared that the politicization of religion and the association with the Church would restrict their autonomy.

Paradoxically the interacting strategies of the two main actors opposed to the formation of confessional parties produced an unwanted outcome. First, the Church took centralized control over the already existing yet loosely organized associations of lay Catholics and propelled the Catholic social movement. Next, provoked by increasing anticlericalism, the movement rapidly politicized, especially when the Church decided to use its organizational capacity in support of those conservative politicians who agreed to defend the Church's interests. This strategy produced two new actors (lay Catholic activists and politically active priests) as well as a new identity (political Catholicism). Finally, the pro-church coalitions turned out to be electorally successful—unexpectedly so. As a result, electoral success accorded political Catholicism the kind of momentum needed to move beyond the control of the Church and to establish confessional parties.

The confessional parties gradually developed their own political theory, making use of—but at the same time moderating—the existing body of Catholic doctrine, adjusting it strategically to the needs of parliamentary politics. This is how a distinctive Catholic political identity emerged, one that helped to disconnect political Catholicism from both the Church and religion. 'Thus, in a paradoxical way', writes Kalyvas (1996: 245) 'the politicization of religion contributed to the secularization of politics'.

## Christianity, democracy, and the working class

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This analysis of the emergence of confessional parties needs to be complemented by an account of how Christian democrats gradually learned to reconcile their religious points of view with the secular demands of liberal-democratic politics. This is not only important but far from obvious, given that confessional parties were originally fiercely anti-liberal parties of religious defence. To the extent that the 'ultramontane' parties took their doctrinal inspiration from Rome, their first and natural references were papal documents. However, the papal documents unequivocally rejected liberal democracy as a 'grave error' and therefore contained no clues as how to justify a political role for Catholics in emerging parliamentary systems.

p. 198 The liberals had become the core of an anti-church movement in the Catholic and religiously mixed countries. They hailed individual freedom and reason as opposed to religion, and they opposed the dominant role that the Church played in politics and society. Most critically, they argued that the Church stood in the way of their nation-building efforts and hindered the training of the population into good, rational, national citizens. The Church's influence therefore had to be eliminated. The Church, in turn, abhorred the liberals for their 'grave errors' and their fiercely anti-religion stance. The Church defined liberal ideas as being opposed to religion and the separation of church and state and the concept of liberty as the grave errors of modernity.

Papal documents from the second half of the nineteenth century show that the Church was particularly worried about losing influence over education, one of the central instruments of socialization (e.g. *Amantissimus*, On the Care of the Churches, 8 April 1862). The Church published a summary of its teaching

on heresies and the errors of modernity (*Syllabus Errorum*) as an annex to the encyclical letter *Quanta Cura* (1864). These errors include rationalism, freedom of religion, socialism, communism, all attacks on the privileges and rights of the Church, the idea that the state is the source of all rights (including the right to interfere in religious and moral matters), public (non-religious) education, and the conviction that secular power trumps religious power. Here, in short, is the error that liberalism teaches: 'The Roman Pontiff can, and ought to, reconcile himself, and come to terms with progress, liberalism and modern civilization' (Pius IX, 1864).

Political Catholicism's acceptance of democracy is something of a riddle, given the anti-liberal and anti-democratic stance of the Church. To elucidate the reconciliation between Christianity and democracy, one must move beyond the exclusive focus on confessional political parties and take a wider view that includes the social as well as the political.

Modern Christian democracy springs from two main sources: political Catholicism, which addressed the changing role and status of the Church after the French Revolution in nineteenth-century Europe, and social Catholicism, which confronted the rise of industrial capitalism and the integration of the proletariat as Christian citizens into modern industrial society. Social Catholicism was politically indifferent to the extent that it did not address the constitutional state, but rather a changing society. Because social Catholicism explored the possibilities of societal power, it initially denied (democratic) politics. It constituted a strategy to 'conserve' workers as religious workers, thus diluting the social and political meaning of class and introducing religion as a basis for the articulation of political identity. It follows that Christian democracy is the result of a historical coincidence of liberal political Catholicism and social Catholicism (Maier, 1969: 22), in which Catholics came to terms with democracy, and successfully defined and refined a social critique of capitalism that left room for social policy and state intervention.

p. 199 The unconditional acceptance of democracy as the chief mechanism to organize, mediate, and moderate social and political conflict is a prerequisite for any political movement claiming the adjective 'democratic' in any legitimate manner. However, the acceptance of democratic principles has been a long and laborious struggle (Moody, 1953: 10; Sigmund, 1987).

The liberal, secular, and individualistic spirit of the French Revolution was the original foe of the Church in the modern era (Irving, 1979). The popes stood for the order of the old regime (Chadwick, 1981). Democracy and the arrogation of possessing the absolute truth do not go well together. Liberal freedom included the freedom of press and in the eyes of the Church, this invited and sanctioned immoral and false publications. The Church therefore was entirely ready to line up on the side of anti-liberal or anti-democratic governments (Chadwick, 1981: 610).

In *Immortali Dei* (1885), Leo XIII (1878–1903) did not exclude democracy as a possible form of government, but it was not until 1944 that a more positive acceptance of democracy was formally proclaimed. At this point, Pius XII (1939–58) argued that state intervention had assumed such large proportions that democratization had become a logical corollary of this increased presence of the state (see Moody, 1953: 70; Maier, 1969: 24). 'If, then, we consider the extent and nature of the sacrifices demanded of all the citizens, especially in our day when the activity of the state is so vast and decisive, the democratic form of government appears to many as a postulate of nature imposed by reason itself' (Pius XII, 1944). According to natural law, a certain endurance in time accords legitimacy to institutions and this facilitated the acceptance of democracy, made easier by the experience of war and fascism in Europe and deepened by the geopolitical dimension of allying the Church to the West and the 'free world' (Dorr, 1983: 78), rather than to the atheist communist regimes.

Equally important is the rapprochement of Church and workers. The criterion of democracy is obvious and straightforward. However, whether and to what extent the Christian democratic movement organizes and

integrates the working class determines its very existence. Without substantial working-class support, there exists no Christian democracy. Pius XI (1922–39) understood the importance of this point when he wrote that ‘the greatest scandal of the nineteenth century was the fact that the church lost the working class’ (cited in Camp, 1969: 77). Thus, Christian democracy’s greatest triumph may well lie in the fact that it managed to reattach parts of the working class, if not to the Church, then at least to a political movement based upon Christian principles.

## The intellectual sources of Christian democracy

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To understand Christian democratic political theory rather better, it is helpful to present the movement’s intellectual roots and explain how political Catholicism, social Catholicism, and the social teaching of the Church provided the material for a political movement that was both Christian and democratic.

### p. 200 Paradoxical consequences of anti-revolutionary political theory

Christian democracy’s first historical source is the French Revolution. The effects of this upheaval on the status and position of the Church in modern society were overwhelmingly negative (Camp, 1969: 5). The ultramontane and anti-individualistic counter-revolutionaries developed a systematic critique of the Revolution, known as traditionalism. History reveals divine truth and institutions prove themselves as willed by God because of their capacity to endure. To replace such institutions by revolution is to deny the will of God. Time is an important element in the evaluation of human institutions and both the Revolution and the Enlightenment were the targets of traditionalist attacks because they denied divine truth.

Paradoxically, the logical conclusion of the traditionalist argument implied support for a distinctive democratic point of view, which marks the birth of *liberal* political Catholicism. First, came the premise that the pope is the ruler of the Church and the Church is superior to the state. Therefore, the Church is greater than the state. If the state blocks obedience to tradition, revolt is not only legitimate but a duty. To be able to rise up against the state’s violation of the Church’s eternal truth, however, freedom of speech, of the press, and of education became mandatory. Second, if the Revolution was a divine judgment, one had to admit that the political forms that emerged from it, notably democracy, deserved a theological justification, too. The typical traditionalist argument is that ‘every good government is good when it has been established and has existed for a long time without being disputed’ (Joseph de Maistre in Lively, 1971: 142). The traditionalist train of thought finally resulted in an espousal of democracy, because time had proven its durability (Maier, 1969).

## Religious decadence causes social misery

The romantic critique of modernity (and of capitalism) rendered it politically relevant in that it attacked Enlightenment assumptions and beliefs, in particular the ideas of rational solutions to human problems and an unshakable trust in progress. The romantic critique of the emerging industrial society was the starting point for social Catholicism (Görner, 1986). Romanticism strove for the restoration of the social order of the Middle Ages as an answer to the uncertainty, instability, and vulnerability of modern times. The romantics addressed the impoverished, although not quite yet proletarian, masses (Stegmann, 1969; Görner, 1986). In their eyes the new spirit of rationalist individualism, the erosion of traditional bonds, and the predominance of the pursuit of self-interest constituted the root cause of the ‘social question’.

Specifically, the romantics were in favour of an organic order of society in which the estates (clergy, nobility, peasants, and emerging bourgeoisie) would be arranged in an orderly manner. These would

p. 201 function as equally vital parts of a body, that is, as if they ↪ were part of a larger whole, a living organism, to whose survival they would all contribute. In such an ideal organic society, the corporation and the *Gemeinschaft* would alter the fate of the individual, whose existence was now threatened by free competition (Weiss, 1977). In short, the romantics fostered a kind of reactionary radicalism, which alienated itself eventually from the more reform-minded social Catholics of the second half of the nineteenth century.

Well into the second half of the nineteenth century, social Catholics considered the detrimental effects of modernization and industrialization as a problem of religion and morality. The disruption brought about by capitalism derived from a society that had given up its Christian values and had let 'egotism' rule (Görner, 1986: 159). The 'social question' was therefore essentially a *religious* question. Because moral decadence and the dechristianization of the masses were the causes of social misery, it was the task of the Church to provide the solution through charity and pastoral care. Social misery did not stem from material needs, but from a lack of faith. Various aberrations of the spirit caused a sickness in social relations, including insatiable hedonism, greed, and narcissism, all of which destroyed the love of one's neighbour. This malaise had infected the rich and the poor alike. The solution lay in the spiritual betterment of man (Stegmann, 1969: 344).

## The social question is an economic question

It was German bishop Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler (1811–77) who began to analyse the social question in terms of reformist social policies, acknowledging that the social question was essentially an *economic* question (see Hogan, 1946: 100). Von Ketteler argued that the dismal material existence of workers was a result of insufficient wages. The wage of the worker had become a commodity, whose price was determined by supply and demand. Von Ketteler called this the 'slave market of our liberal Europe' and argued that economic efficiency and capitalist competition threatened the material position of wage labourers and led to malnutrition and starvation of workers and their families (Von Ketteler, 1864; Stegmann, 1969: 354).

This reorientation inverted the causal relationship between religious and moral degeneration and the industrial revolution. It became clear that 'miserable social relationships are the cause of the alienation of the workers from the Church, and not the reverse' (Von Ketteler, cited in Görner, 1986: 168, my translation). As a result, a new role for the state became feasible. The Church was not to rely on charity alone, but to support public social policy. Von Ketteler strongly influenced papal teaching, especially *Rerum Novarum* (1891) (Hogan, 1946: 237; Aubert, 2003). This encyclical explicitly addressed the conditions of the working class and constituted a theoretical attempt to move away from old ideas on the centrality of charity and neighbourly love to a new conception of justice. However, it was not until the reign of Pius XI that the development of modern Catholic social theory, distinct from the notion of charity, was finalized.

p. 202 In sum, Christian democracy is intimately affiliated with the European tradition of political and social Catholicism. Vatican social teaching had afforded the European Christian democratic movement a body of social doctrine that they were able to 'translate' for practical purposes. Social Catholicism provided the Christian democratic movements of Western Europe with a concern for social issues and with a practical theory of social policy and modern politics.



## The distinctiveness of Christian democracy

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The key concepts of Christian democracy's political philosophy are anti-materialism (stressing a religious, spiritual view of history and humankind), personalism (highlighting the dignity of the human person in his or her community), popularism (promoting a harmonious, organic, and reconciliatory view of 'the people' and democracy; not to be confused with 'populism'), and subsidiarity (encouraging a distribution of power to functionally defined authorities) (see extensively Invernizzi-Accetti, 2019). The movement's political ideology prioritizes integration, (class) compromise, accommodation, social capitalism, and pluralism. The ceaseless attempt at integrating and reconciling a plurality of societal groups with seemingly opposed interests makes Christian democracy distinctive. Class reconciliation, cooperation, and integration lie at the heart of Christian democracy's self-understanding.

These features imply that the movement is always in principle (by virtue and by necessity of its self-imposed political position) multidimensional, flexible, and in possession of a highly developed capacity to adapt its goal of formulating a compromise between antagonistic interests. Christian democracy is in this sense the embodiment of societal accommodation, or at least aspires to become so. It is therefore a characteristic of Christian democracy that the movement is internally divided into factions or wings and that it tends to establish organizational links with, for instance, both the labour movement and organizations of employers. The central ideological concepts not only reflect multidimensionality and flexibility, but also facilitate the coexistence of such a plurality of views and interests. The exact balance of power within the movement and—as far as the movement mirrors society—within the national community determines the precise contents of the political ideology.

Christian democracy is more articulate than conservatism on matters of social concern, while its central position rests on distinctive principles, including the appeal to religion. Christian democracy has its own model of social policy, called social capitalism (Van Kersbergen, 1995), which differs significantly from both the liberal and the social democratic models of social policy, and which establishes Christian democratic distinctiveness vis-à-vis conservatism and social democracy.

p. 203 There exists an unequivocal link between this idea and a number of the other factors identified above. For example, social capitalism was the model through which Christian democracy tried to establish cross-class appeal, and religion was its vehicle. Religious appeal is in principle universal in the sense that it appeals to all people who share a common religion, confession, or simply a cultural heritage that was strongly influenced by Christianity, whether they be capitalists or workers, men or women, young or old, black or white, and whether they live in a town or in the country. Religion cuts through class and unites social cleavages, a fundamental condition for the establishment of social capitalism.

Christian democracy attempts to moderate societal cleavages—and in particular the antagonism between labour and capital—in order to attract voters from all sections of society and especially from the working class. At the same time, Christian democracy tries to stabilize the political and ideological importance of religious cleavages as well as other conflicts that appear to have beneficial effects on Christian democratic electoral support. Thus Christian democracy cuts across policy. The Christian democratic model of social capitalism attempts to build bridges between the various social, economic, and cultural groups within a society, creating a way of working that allows for a reinforcement of occupational, economic, and social status differentials, echoing an organic view of society.

Christian democracy is a political movement which appeals to all people who can accept its basic message. Domestically, the message is that all classes, groups, and layers in society must work harmoniously together to find solutions for their differences of opinions and conflicts of interest. Christian democracy expresses politically the principled and religiously inspired conviction that social harmony must always be the fundamental goal of politics, giving all persons as members of social units (such as the family) what is

due to them. At the international level, this very same political conviction has expressed itself in the broad ambition to forge bonds between nation-states, to restore harmony after the most distorting event imaginable, namely war, and to work together to determine the fates of nations. Indeed, this conviction has been so determining for the various Christian democratic parties in Europe that these parties became the driving force of European integration.

## Christian democracy and the European Union

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p. 204 Christian democrats see the idea of European integration as a product of their own imagination: first as a solution to war and, second, as an indispensable answer to international coordination problems that hamper economic and social prosperity. They pride themselves on being responsible for the success of European integration (Oostlander, ↵ 2003: 131). The most recent manifesto of the (Christian democratic in origin) European People's Party (EPP) starts with the following sentence: 'Our political family is the driving force of European integration', complemented with the statement: 'We want a European Political Union' (EPP, 2012).

There are legitimate reasons for their pride (Van Kemseke, 2006; Kaiser, 2007). Speaking of Christian democratic politicians in the interwar years, Peter Pulzer (2004: 21) states that it is important to 'recognize the extent to which the idea of political action beyond the boundaries of the nation-state was alive in those decades and how many of those who realized the European idea after 1945 served their political apprenticeship then'. In the six pioneering states of European integration (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands), Christian democratic parties were well-established parties. Famously, in British eyes the Christian democratic ambition in Europe was suspected to be a 'Catholic conspiracy, orchestrated from the Vatican' (Young, 1998). As Pulzer (2004: 22) put it: 'The odour of incense clung to the movement. At the heart of the new enterprise was the Europe of Charlemagne; it was not at all clear to everyone whether they were witnessing the birth of a United States of Europe or the resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire.'

For Christian democracy, a pro-European and pro-integration stance came more naturally than for any of its rivals. 'For European liberals and conservatives the sovereign nation-state had always been the ideal', while 'many on the Left were suspicious of the EEC, when it was founded, as a rich man's club' (Pulzer, 2004: 22). Its core and distinctive ideological concepts seemed ready-made for European integration. First, the principles of integration and accommodation are key constituents of the Christian democratic political philosophy (Irving, 1979). Second, the doctrine of personalism stresses that *individuals* only become full *persons* when they are members of their respective communities. The sovereign nation-state is but one such community. 'The national community is just one among others—locality, workplace, religion—and not fundamentally different from a supranational community' (Hanley, 2002: 464). Third, Christian democrats adopted the Catholic notion of subsidiarity as a principle of governance, affording the movement a unique, quasi-federalist principle to both structure *and* constrain its supranational ambitions (Van Kersbergen and Verbeek, 1994; Invernizzi-Accetti, 2018).

Political rather than economic dynamics have been propelling European integration. '“Europe” provided the institutional context in which the continuous struggle for power between France and Germany could at last be fought using peaceful means' (Lieshout, 1999: 1–2). Even though the French initially launched a supranational solution to the 'German question' (the Schuman Plan), a traditional intergovernmental approach quickly overtook it. Since the Schuman Plan, the governments of the Member States have determined all major steps in further European integration. Because governments consisted of political parties, understanding the political dynamics of European integration requires an appreciation of the role that parties play. Christian democratic parties have been crucial drivers in this respect. This holds true for

the various phases of integration: the foundation period 1947–57, a time of sclerosis (the 1960s and 1970s), the ↵ rebirth of Europe in the mid-1980s, and its rapid deepening and widening (the 1990s and 2000s) (Kaiser, 2007; Forlenza, 2017; Johansson, 2017; Pasture, 2017).

The best example is ‘subsidiarity’, a term that since the mid-1970s has surfaced, implicitly or explicitly, in most documents in which the European Parliament sought a way out of the dominant mood of Euro-pessimism. A striking feature of almost all documents is the prominent presence of Christian democratic politicians, which is explained by the fact that early on they had developed a coherent vision of European integration and become sincere advocates of this idea. Moreover, national Christian democratic parties were relatively keen on organizing at the level of the European Community, which led to the formation in 1976 of a federation of Christian democratic parties, the EPP (Irving, 1979; Pridham and Pridham, 1981; Hanley, 2002; Van Hecke, 2004; Kaiser, 2007). Leo Tindemans, the EPP’s first president, affirmed that ‘the goal of our new party will be to breathe new life into the idea of European union; to fight to ensure that European unity is eventually achieved’ (as cited in Irving, 1979: 249). Moreover, the political and electoral manifestos of the EPP have been explicitly federalist. ‘The EPP is committed to a strong Europe based on a federal model that relies on the principle of subsidiarity’ (EPP, 2017).

The success of the subsidiarity principle at Maastricht is partly explained by the fact that, coincidentally, in 1991 a majority of European leaders held a positive opinion of subsidiarity, though often diverging with regard to its specific meaning (Van Kersbergen and Verbeek, 1994: 221–6; Johansson, 2002). At Maastricht, policymakers represented three different varieties of the philosophy of subsidiarity. The first was the Christian democratic tradition, which considered subsidiarity to be a flexible criterion in order to determine to what extent the state can legitimately interfere in society. The second was a specifically German philosophy, a much more legalistic notion, which held that responsibilities should be given to public (rather than private) authorities at a level as decentralized as possible. A third interpretation had its roots in a social-minded faction within the British Conservative Party.

At Maastricht, then, most political leaders had a positive understanding of subsidiarity, either because they were Christian democrats (Belgium, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Luxembourg), versed in German federalism (German Chancellor Helmut Kohl), or proponents of the Tory party’s social (one-nation) conservatism (Prime Minister John Major). Moreover, the then-President of the Commission, Jacques Delors, had been familiar with the concept because of his previous career in a small French Catholic trade union. Subsidiarity could tie together pro- and anti-federalists and at the same time protect various special interests.

Thus, Christian democracy has contributed to the, historically speaking, unique phenomenon of European integration: that is, the voluntary transfer of decision-making power from the level of nation-states to the supranational level of the EU. As Wolfram Kaiser (2007) has convincingly shown, Christian democrats have played a crucial, if not decisive, role. Their consistent support for European integration can, moreover, be explained with reference to their conviction that integration (in the sense of accommodation of conflicting interests, both domestically and internationally) is a religiously (Christian) inspired duty.

## Is there a future for Christian democracy in Europe?

Is Christian democracy a phenomenon of the past, rapidly becoming extinct and hence with no contemporary relevance? The fate of the once hegemonic parties (in Italy, the Netherlands, and Belgium) and the continuing decline of the Swiss party would seem to indicate this. However, the German combination of Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social Union (CSU), although certainly much weaker now than in its heyday, still gained 34.7 per cent of the vote in the German federal elections in 2017 and in 2020 continued to govern. The Austrian Christian democratic party (ÖVP) also regained some of its strength in the national elections of 2017, moving from a meagre 24 per cent in 2013 to 31.4 per cent in 2017. The ÖVP has been in government since 1986.

It is not difficult to imagine why many people might be inclined to think of Christian democracy as outdated and on the brink of disappearing. If a party heavily depends on the presence of voters for whom Christianity is an important motivation, including in political life, then surely ongoing or even accelerating secularization cannot but end in the death of Christian democracy. However, secularization not only refers to the dwindling influence of religion on society and culture (Taylor, 2007), but also to the translation of a religious morality into secular ethics and culture. Thus secularization is partly a transformation of religious content into worldly substance, as a result of which the overt religious influence on politics vanishes and is supplanted by a 'diffuse moralism throughout society' (Mead, 1983: 52–3).

Christianity has thoroughly influenced Western culture, but much of this heritage is no longer recognizable as religious in origin. This implies that Christian democratic parties might adapt to secularization by toning down their religious inspiration, thereby contributing themselves to secularization. At the same time, however, this would open up their appeal to a much wider public. The broader audience consists of what one could call 'Christians without God'—that is, people who would call themselves secular or secularized, but who still share a fundamental worldview in the form of secular norms and values that are Christian in origin. While this continues to offer an opportunity for Christian democracy, there is no guarantee of success. It isn't easy to strip off the explicitly and exclusively Christian ideological baggage while at the same time reconstructing a Christian-inspired package of beliefs, values, and norms. Deploying a term originally invented by Stathis Kalyvas, one could say that contemporary Christian democratic politics is neither religious nor secular: it is rather *unsecular*. It remains an open question as to what extent Christian democratic parties will continue to survive electorally by following the route of unsecular politics.

Invernizzi-Accetti (2018, 2019) develops another intriguing argument, namely that Christian democracy would live on even if the parties were to die, namely because its ideas and principles have become deeply embedded in Europe's political and cultural ↴ mainstream. One must be careful, however, not to stretch the argument too far; it is possible to read too much Christian democratic influence on Europe. As argued above, for example, some EU features, such as subsidiarity, cannot be ascribed unambiguously to the impact of Christian democracy.

Without doubt, the topic of Christian democracy and Europe merits further study, because much is still unknown. Moreover, the position of Christian democrats themselves seems to be shifting. Are the Christian democratic parties retreating somewhat from their principled pro-European point of view, faced as they are with increasing resistance from their national electorates? How are they coping with the conflict between what the public seems to want and what their convictions prescribe? Specifically, are they responding to the electoral challenge of the populist and radical right by adopting a more Euro-sceptical stance?

With respect to the latter, it is pertinent to ask whether Christian democracy can or should be a (normative) bulwark against the populist right (e.g. Müller, 2014; Invernizzi-Accetti, 2019). The difficulty here is that radical-right supporters tend to be anti-Islamic, anti-immigration, and anti-EU. Such sentiments are part of their appeal and one could therefore question whether it is possible or even likely that Christian

democracy can channel such views in a direction that is more compatible with the health and stability of democracy and Christian principles and values, as Invernizzi-Accetti (2019) hopes. Given the sentiments that the populist right appeals to, is that really an option? It is quite clear, for example, that the Bavarian Christian democratic party (CSU) was unsuccessful in its attempt to counter the far-right *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) during the 2018 Bavaria state elections by adopting an EU-critical and anti-immigration stance. The party lost 10.5 percentage points while the AfD went from zero to 10.2 per cent. In other words, even if it were a normative option, it does not seem to be a viable one.

Religion as a cognitive shortcut for party identification has declined spectacularly, but not everywhere and not to the same extent. Moreover, the link between religion (and secularization) and party identification and affiliation is not solely determined by structural factors such as the level of religiosity or of secularization, but is fundamentally open. This happens because political movements and parties are not passive casualties of changes in social structure, but actors that respond creatively to structural changes in society. The movement's future therefore depends on the adaptive strategies chosen by the Christian democratic parties.

First, they could revive the old Christian-inspired social doctrine, or at least develop more of a 'social face' (e.g. with regard to immigration and the welfare state) than their main competitors on the conservative right. This seems to be the road chosen by the CDU under Angela Merkel, obviously with some success (Green and Turner, 2015). A second option is to become much less Christian and more genuinely conservative. This seems to characterize the development of the EPP in the 1990s, when the party group opened up to the British and Nordic conservatives, the centre-right parties from Eastern and Central Europe, and finally right-wing parties such as Hungary's Fidesz.

p. 208 A third direction is to become a communitarian party in an attempt to mobilize those postmaterialist voters who have conservative and sometimes even reactionary views (in the sense of longing for the values of the past), and who lean towards but do not necessarily affiliate with Christianity. Communitarian Christian democracy emphasizes the need to protect small communities (family, neighbourhood, village, organizations of civil society) that are threatened by the impersonal forces of cultural and economic globalization. The parties in the Netherlands and Belgium have tried to embrace this route, but with (it must be said) dubious results.

The final possibility is to become more fundamentalist Christian and nationalist, forming a modern nationalist-confessional party, if you will. The recent conflicts within the EPP around Viktor Orbán's Fidesz indicate that some actors wish to develop in this direction, while others strongly oppose it. Orbán sees himself as the defender of Christian Europe, declaring that the European Parliament elections in 2019 could bring about a shift towards illiberal 'Christian democracy', ending the kind of 'multiculturalism' that he condemns (Orbán, 2018). To become a party exclusively for Christian nationalists has electoral drawbacks in a secular milieu. However, combining nationalism and an exclusive appeal to Christian (or Catholic) culture has proved to be a viable strategy in Hungary, and, to an extent, in Poland. The question is whether other parties will be tempted to emulate this approach.

## Conclusion

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Christian democracy is a distinctive political movement which is the heir to the Catholic confessional parties that emerged in the late nineteenth century. Confessional parties were parties of religious defence that—like the Roman Catholic Church—originally rejected liberal democracy. Both the Church and the Catholic political movement struggled to reconcile Christianity and democracy and to find a politically viable and electorally attractive response to the challenges of industrial society (the 'social question').

Christian democracy is a distinctively Western European phenomenon that emerged from the union of political and social Catholicism. The movement adapted Vatican social teaching to establish its own distinctive social policy model. This model aimed at the moderation of social conflicts, in particular the conflict between social classes. Armed with an elaborate social and political ideology and by appealing to religion and religious values, Christian democracy as a political actor aspired to be attractive to all sections of the electorate. It established a political programme that stressed reconciliation, cooperation, and integration, at both the national and international level. For this reason Christian democracy was a key driver in the process of European integration and the formation of the EU.

Although there is significant variation between countries (anywhere between the Austrian and German achievements and the Italian failure), the overall picture of Christian democratic power in recent decades is one of substantial decline. The dwindling importance of religion for party choice plays an obvious role here.

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That said, ↴ there is still some room for political movements to respond actively and strategically to changes in their environment (including secularization). It is impossible to predict which Christian democratic parties will be able to maintain their current strength and/or recover their lost ground, and which parties will fail and vanish from the political scene.

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CHAPTER

## 12 Religion and the Cold War in Europe

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### Abstract

This chapter examines the religious Cold War, spawned by the West, and its impact throughout Europe. The religious Cold War was a diverse, multidimensional, complex global phenomenon whose salience varied according to the stage of the conflict, geographical location, cultural underpinnings, as well as national and local dynamics. Europe, where the Cold War began and ended, was a multiconfessional continent wherein Christianity, with its intimate historical, cultural, and indeed national links, was the dominant religion. The chapter focuses on the impact of the East–West power struggle on the churches and how they met its various challenges, especially fear of nuclear obliteration. During the Cold War religious organizations negotiated the arms race, détente, decolonization, globalization, secularization, and the growing importance of the developing world. The chapter examines their religio-political evolution as they encountered the Cold War, their contribution to ending it, and their position in the post-Cold War global order.

**Keywords:** Cold War, religious Cold War, communism, capitalism, arms race, détente, decolonization, globalization, secularization

**Subject:** History of Religion, Religion

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RELIGION was not a Cold War ‘master variable’, but one that acquired, lost, and reacquired salience over the course of the conflict with different levels of intensity in different countries. Deeply intertwined with other cultural and social forms, religion is intricately implicated with the political. A transnational entity with multiple national sites, religion constitutes a very complex category for politico-historical analysis, particularly in the context of a still deeply contested Cold War historiography. The ‘religious cold war’ in Europe illustrated how faith can function as an integral part of the hegemonic religious system and support a dominant order. It equally demonstrated how religion can be one of the most vigorous critics of both and even a fervent opponent.

It was in Europe that the Cold War began, in 1945, and ended, in 1989. A multiconfessional continent, populated by diverse peoples and cultures, with different histories, languages, and religions, Europe had significant Jewish and Muslim communities, with centuries-old societies of the latter in the Balkans. The

dominant religion for over 1,500 years, however, was Christianity. Intimately linked to Europe's historical, cultural, and indeed national roots, it is the focus of this chapter, which begins by examining the standing of religion in Europe as the Cold War emerged amidst the destruction and devastation of the Second World War. It also examines the influence of pre-war factors that both complicated and nuanced the religious cold war, before assessing the aspirations of churchmen for a more meaningful role in the post-war world. Attention is given to the World Council of Churches (WCC), the institutional expression of the ecumenical movement, and the Vatican, representing the Roman Catholic branch of European Christendom. A separate section examines religion in the Soviet bloc. The chapter addresses the evolution of Christianity over the course of the Cold War, marked by fear of nuclear obliteration, détente, decolonization, globalization, secularization, and the growing influence of Christians in the developing world; it concludes by looking at religion and the end of the Cold War.

## The East–West divide

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Christianity was by the twentieth century a worldwide religion with power concentrated in Europe and North America. The Cold War brought to the fore all its contradictions. From being a religion of the poor and dispossessed, Christianity became a religion of empire. European Christianity was supported by a social and legal framework that involved coercion, control, and an alliance with state authority. Christian institutions tend to be inherently conservative with a history of state accommodation, moderated by the need for differentiation from the rest of society that required resistance to absorption by the state, accompanied by a desire to influence it. Religion was not the primary target of Marxists who denounced it as a reactionary curse while recognizing its revolutionary potential. Their enemy was economic and social exploitation (Boer, 2018). Indeed, the idea of a Christian form of communism was first proposed by Karl Kautsky (1854–1938), the leading intellectual of the second generation of Marxists, who identified the impulse toward it in the gospels.<sup>1</sup>

Europe, deeply diverse and long riven by religious antagonisms, was a divided entity before the Cold War. The fault line that very largely came to separate the Communist bloc from the 'Free World' historically separated Catholic, and following the Reformation, Protestant, from Orthodox (Kirby, 2018). Despite the secularization, materialism, and depersonalization that marked modern Europe, religion still mattered at the start of the Cold War and the religious character of society was widely assumed. Religion was strongest among peasant populations. Swathes of Eastern Europe remained agrarian societies with large peasant populations. Not that Western Europe was devoid of peasantry and poverty, but its states were generally wealthier and more developed and secularized. A further distinction derived from the fact that the main Western European states had overseas empires. Frantz Fanon saw Europe as the creation of brutal and exploitative colonialism. East European states mainly had histories replete with subjection to invasion and empire, exacerbating resentment of Soviet domination. In contrast, the USA emphasized common cultural bonds, especially religion, and presented itself as the defender of Western civilization and Christianity from the encroaches of a 'godless' Soviet foe bent on world conquest. Western European statesmen largely saw USA–Soviet rivalry in the traditional power-struggle mode rather than the morality play projected by American propaganda. However, an alliance with US military might and wealth meant support for reconstruction and an opportunity to retain lucrative imperial acquisitions. Intent on making the old empires conduits for its economic expansion, America supported European efforts to secure their colonial possessions in a process Kwame Nkrumah called 'collective imperialism' (Nkrumah, 1965). Hence ↵

Western Europe was a more willing partner of its American 'ally' than was Eastern Europe of its Soviet 'liberator'.

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Europe became a front-line Cold War battleground impacted by policies formulated by the competing powers. A war fought on two fronts, at home and abroad, the early Cold War saw Eastern Europe subjected to

the tightening grip of Moscow, while Western Europe was subjected to Washington's planned post-war order. No part of Western Europe was immune from anti-American sentiment and widespread disillusionment with the consequences of capitalism, seen as fascism, slump, and war. Within Eastern Europe there was widespread resentment of and resistance to the Soviet model. As former colonies discovered that the Atlantic Charter's wartime promises for freedom and self-determination seemingly extended only to states that experienced Nazi occupation, Eastern European peoples realized that Cold War divisions meant they too were excluded. At the same time, Western European aspirations of becoming a 'Third Force' were subsumed by the competing superpower models of industrial modernity, capitalist or socialist.<sup>2</sup> Yet each promised egalitarianism, democracy, and better lives for the masses, promoting extensive transnational projects, including religious, to support their strategic narratives.

As a source of power and persuasion, religion assumed a critical role in the ideological conflict waged by the two superpowers, with each side concerned to 'extend their influence' and 'change the discursive environment in which they operate'. As 'sense-making devices' that 'forge shared meanings', the strategic narratives of East and West had to consider the religious sensibilities that informed Europe's history, culture, and politics (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle, 2013: 2). These were influential as part of the apparatus by which European nations told their stories and as such were crucial to the formation of public opinion and the practice of public diplomacy. Religion was notably prominent in America's strategic narrative, deployed effectively in Western Europe to create a shared understanding of a given issue, event, or international condition (Kirby, 2000: 385–412). The Soviet Union also deployed its religious resources, however clumsily, to cultivate support and counter anti-communist sentiment. Its dire record of religious persecution was an obvious impediment, as was its treatment of those religious peoples and institutions unwilling to cooperate fully with the state.

p. 215 Soviet responses to religion during the Cold War were at least partially conditioned by interwar experiences. The interwar period was characterized by a transnational *Kulturkampf* marked by the opening of religious fronts in Europe's latent civil wars. National and international networks of conservative Christians organized around anti-secularism, for example the League for the Protection of Western Culture and the *Entente internationale anticommuniste*. Most important, following the breakdown of Soviet–Vatican relations, the Soviets designated the pope the spiritual ringleader of a united Western front. The Soviets had a pathological fear of Western encirclement from the Revolution onwards. They had proven particularly concerned about Catholic Action attempts to overturn the Treaty of Rapallo (1922) to secure German participation in an anti-Soviet alliance. Following the Vatican's 1933 concordat with Germany, Cardinal Michael von Faulhaber (1869–1952) reminded the Nazis of what it entailed, given that the pope had 'placed the moral powers of the church at the disposal of the Führer of the German Reich for his struggle against godlessness and immorality' (Weir, 2015: 280–306).

Despite an accommodation with religion during the war, including overtures to the Vatican, the war's end witnessed Moscow and Rome as the continent's major adversaries (Deutscher, 1972: 506–7; Kirby, 2014b: 721–44). Pius XII (1939–58) worried that the wartime alliance had legitimized the Soviet regime and inoculated the West to the danger it represented (*The Tablet*, 1943: 138). The emergence of the Cold War would lead to a consequential alliance between the world's new hegemon, the USA, and its last absolute monarchy, the Vatican, the European locus of ideological opposition toward the Soviets, exacerbating Stalin's already paranoid mindset. Reflecting the extent of Soviet preoccupation with Vatican hostility, the chairman of the Council for Russian Orthodox Affairs, Georgii Karpov, set out a strategy for reducing papal influence and weakening the control of the Catholic Church in the Soviet-liberated areas. Convinced Roman Catholicism sought religious and temporal power, Karpov wanted the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) to alert its sister churches to Vatican ambition, reminding them of its relationship with Hitler and of Catholic dogma claiming the pope to be God's representative on Earth (Dickinson, 2013: 23–36).

Karpov was worried about internal stability. War's end brought large Catholic populations within the Soviet sphere of influence. He also feared the Vatican would impede improved relationships between Moscow and the rest of the world. In 1947 when President Harry S. Truman (1945–53) openly and deliberately reached out to the Vatican in what was widely interpreted as an 'anti-Red crusade', it inevitably alarmed the Soviets. Fear and suspicion were heightened when the president called for an international religious anti-communist front, including the WCC and the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate at Constantinople. Western support for deeply anti-Soviet émigré churches and communities confirmed the suspicions of communist regimes that the West was weaponizing religion (Kirby, 1997: 1–17).

## Aspirations for a Christian post-war order

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In the course of the twentieth century, where societies were marked not by unbelief but by the diminished authority of religion over people's lives, the two global conflicts added urgency to convictions that the churches should be engaged with and an influence on worldly affairs. Many European churchmen, particularly those party to the war effort and post-war planning, aspired to a meaningful post-war role. Christian thinking about reconstruction was informed by the concept of the churches as a supra-national world community, in which religious identity transcended that of nation and ideology. In Britain, in what has been acknowledged as a creative, imaginative, indeed radical, period in social and political thought, churchmen added their voices to those demanding war aims that extended beyond defeating the Axis powers, to promises of a new and better world.

Wartime church–state cooperation reinforced existing convictions about how a combination of governmental and spiritual power was helpful in ensuring successful social, economic, and political outcomes, strengthening relations between church and statesmen (Kirby, 1999). Hence Europe's churches emerged from the Second World War confident that the post-war period offered the opportunity to rebuild the foundations of Christendom. Increased church attendance during the war meant Europe's Christian leaders anticipated post-war spiritual renewal. Even more importantly, on both sides of the Atlantic existed the conviction among secular political leaders that a shared religious ethos was critical to and the basis for political order, making them supportive of 'a rebirth of Christendom' (Keyserlingk, 1986: 539–58; Parmar, 1994: 199–318). Imbued with a sense of opportunity, of resurgent Christianity, and with aspirations to be part of the new social and political order promised during the war, Europe's Christian leaders sought access, and were welcomed into, the corridors of power (Kirby, 1999; Coupland, 2006). The latter was of particular importance to Pope Pius XII, who was obsessed with excluding the Soviet Union from the post-war order. He advocated and supported Christian reconciliation to counter the spread of communism (Graham, 1959; Chadwick, 1986; Kirby, 1997: 1–17; Kent, 2002; Coppa, 2003: 50–66).

Nor were Christian hopes for post-war renewal and revival absent in Eastern Europe. The ROC, brought by Stalin to the verge of extinction by the eve of the war, harboured hopes that its wartime service and the favour this secured from Stalin could reverse the depredations of the inter-war years and enhance its societal standing. Indeed, because it suited the interests of the communist state, the ROC was helped to expand its reach beyond Soviet borders (Dickinson, 2013: 23–36). For most religious institutions, influence was indirect, via the size and standing of their national membership; for others, a prime example being the Church of England which was entitled to seats in the House of Lords, via close relations to the political class and direct links to state institutions. The history and status of the home country on the world stage mattered in determining which religious leaders might reach a global audience. As a war victor and having a 'special' relationship with the USA, Britain's churches expected to assume a leadership role and not only in post-war Europe.<sup>3</sup>

p. 217 Amid the questions and debates about religion's role in the new world order, Christian responses to the Cold War were far from uniform. Communism and capitalism represented complex phenomena, operating on a variety of levels from the geopolitical to the philosophical and the psychological. Ecumenical leaders feared communism, as acknowledged by W. A. Visser 't Hooft (1900–1985), the first secretary general of the WCC: 'fear because it means dynamite in the social realm' and 'fear for the emergence of a powerful Russia as an imperialist nation' (Kirby, 2014a: 126–52). The fear of Bolshevism instilled by the Russian Revolution extended to socialism and caused a tempering of some Protestant critiques of poverty and inequality and a reduction in support for the social gospel. However, the First World War and the Depression led to advocacy that the Christian message should be critical and challenging. Recognition of previous overidentification with the forces of privilege and political conformity galvanized Christian support in Europe for state welfare provision.

Catholicism neatly illustrated the contradictions elicited by the Cold War. There was the uncompromising ex-cathedra prohibition symbolized in the figure of Pius XII, 'l'ultimo papa' (Spinosa, 1992). He presided over Catholic leaders within Eastern Europe, many of whom favoured compromise with the new communist regimes. Later, including in most Catholic Poland, came liberation theologians who valued aspects of Marxism. Hence in neither Eastern nor Western Europe could the faithful or their institutions be relied upon as conduits of state imposed ideological conformity.

## Rome and Geneva

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In Western Europe, the Vatican and the WCC stood atop a myriad of Christian organizations seeking meaningful engagement in public life. Although church leaders were excluded from peace negotiations, ecumenically minded churchmen hoped the post-war era would permit an opportunity to promote global peace grounded in socio-political and economic justice. However, secular manoeuvring to secure Christian sanction for Cold War policies confronted the movement with a choice between endorsing the West's politico-religious narrative or adhering to its own ecumenical and prophetic aims. The former offered political approbation and access to the highest echelons of power; the latter political criticism, marginalization, diminished finances, and status (Gill, 2012). Nonetheless, at its inaugural assembly in July 1948 the WCC took a firm stand against allying itself with either Washington or Moscow—communism or capitalism. Unwilling to compromise its goal of Christian unity, it was also alarmed by the prospect of a Rome–Washington partnership, which appeared a manifestation of Protestantism's worst nightmare (Kirby, 2001: 35–70). Regarding the Catholic Church as propagandistic, opportunistic, power hungry and ready 'to pounce on democracy while it was weak and destroy it', Europe's Protestant leaders considered Catholicism essentially totalitarian: 'the arch enemy of democracy and of its principal guardian, Protestantism' (Sittser, 1997: 107).<sup>4</sup> That Protestants suffered discrimination and obstruction from the civil authorities in Catholic Italy did not help. Nor did the 1928 Papal Encyclical *Mortalium animos*, which indicted the ecumenical movement in terms of the general failure of Protestantism, theological indifferentism, and woolly liberalism. It called for opposition to 'schemes for the promiscuous union into one body of all who call themselves Christians', discouraging Catholics from 'giving countenance to a false Christianity quite alien to the one Church of Christ'.

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Ecumenical mistrust of the Vatican and reluctance to become embroiled with it in an anti-communist crusade was discernible in the churches of America's junior Cold War partner. The hierarchy of the Church of England was historically linked to the Crown and government. Its Council for Foreign Relations worked closely with the British Foreign Office, whose Information Research Department, responsible for 'negative' anti-communist propaganda, helped shape its Cold War perspectives and pronouncements. The Foreign Office regarded its relationship with America as crucial to Britain's prosperity and world standing. Unwilling to challenge America in areas of particular sensitivity touching on its 'chosen' nation conceit, the Foreign



Office sought to ensure that Britain's churches did not transgress the established Cold War consensus (Kirby, 2000: 385–414). One means was the formation of a private and informal committee on communism that advised the Archbishop of Canterbury (Kirby, 2019). However, while the hierarchy adhered to the Foreign Office line and marginalized dissenting voices in clerical ranks, it resisted Truman's endeavours to co-opt it into the international religious anti-communist front he sought to construct. Privately the Archbishop of Canterbury considered the plan reflected America's 'will to dominate' (Kirby, 2012: 167–81).

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The Church of Scotland, the 'Kirk', which pursued the reformed tradition of active participation in political affairs, had autonomy as a national church. It enjoyed formal state recognition while protected on spiritual matters from state intervention. For the Foreign Office, the 'church of a nation without a national government', meant it ranked with the English free churches. Like them it possessed a strong missionary tradition, historical and personal links with reformed churches in continental Europe, and commitments to the ecumenical movement. Over a period of five years from 1949, four reports from a Special Commission on Communism appointed by the Kirk's General Assembly illustrated the impact of the Cold War on the free churches generally. Representing a range of theological viewpoints, most endorsed the Cold War consensus of an ideological struggle between two opposing forces, while expressing concerns about the deployment of religion for secular purposes. They acknowledged that the intensity and commitment of communists to social justice mirrored that of Christianity. Church literature was replete with stories of enduring Christian devotion behind the Iron Curtain alongside comparisons between the half-hearted Western believer on one hand, and the passionate, committed communist on the other. Considerable attention was devoted to the historical conditions that had contributed to the emergence of communism, particularly the churches' own failings. Nonetheless, at the local level, British clergy used the Cold War climate to reinvigorate the faith and commitment of their congregations. The communist threat offered 'a useful (and widely acceptable) scapegoat against which clergy could attempt to re-forge the waning connection between religious duty, social participation and national identity' (Jones, 2013: 188–99).

The complexities of Europe's religious cold war were starkly visible in Catholic Italy, which was on the Axis side during the Second World War but hosted Western Europe's second largest communist party, the Italian Communist Party (*Partito Comunista Italiano*—PCI). Italy became a crucial Cold War fulcrum in which American intervention and its special relationship with the Vatican proved decisive, reflected in how the Christian Democrats won the crucial 1948 elections and battled communism for decades afterwards. John Pollard has examined how 'Rome or Moscow' became a potent symbol in Europe's Cold War, without which Catholicism would not have achieved such hegemony. In 1949 the Vatican deployed the Church's ultimate weapon, excommunication. It also used traditional popular devotions, especially to the Sacred Heart and Our Lady. The Vatican exerted pressure on the neutralist and pacifist wings of the Christian Democrats to support Italy's NATO entrance in 1949, notwithstanding its concern that Pius XII should not be seen as the 'chaplain to NATO'. That said, Vatican actions were clearly interpreted as a declaration of war that generated a communist response deeply damaging to Catholicism in Eastern Europe (Pollard, 2013: 103–17).

Vatican policies also proved detrimental for Italy. The construction of a Christian democratic party machine independent of Catholic Action created enormous potential for electoral patronage and began a practice of clientelism and corruption that eventually led to the collapse of the Christian democratic regime itself. Its fifty-year longevity was due to the Cold War exclusion from power wherever possible of communists, who suffered from the stigma of excommunication. The focus on anti-communism by the Church and the Christian Democrats, for whom it was the winning electoral card, meant the neglect of other serious moral issues, one such being the Sicilian Mafia (Pollard, 2013: 103–17).

Catholic indictments of communism and socialism pre-dated the Cold War. From their origins, both challenged religious authority in social and moral questions. Nonetheless, as the Cold War ground relentlessly on, papal attitudes evolved from Pius XII's anti-Soviet alliance with America to a stance, clearly discernible from John XXIII (1958–63) on, which was critical of both the Soviet and US camps. The Vatican



learned quite early in the Cold War that its support for the USA did not engender reciprocity when Stalin publicly expelled Josip Broz Tito's Yugoslavia from the Cominform. For Pius XII Tito was simply another communist bandit hostile to Catholicism. For America he represented an opportunity to 'penetrate and disunite the Soviet bloc' (Gallagher, 2003: 118–44). American overtures to Tito disregarded Vatican sensibilities, revealing how for the USA political expediency trumped religious considerations. Notably, however, rather than shifting into an alliance with the West, Yugoslavia adhered to its own brand of communism, becoming instrumental in building the non-aligned movement, established in Belgrade in 1961.

At the same time, the Vatican discovered that its own hierarchies were prepared to work out *modus vivendi* with their communist governments. The Vatican's hard line stance towards the new communist regimes had been unwelcome to bishops, clergy, and laity who considered church interests could best be protected by cooperation. This was the case in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria where the church was initially treated relatively well (Kent, 2002). Hence, in the course of the 1950s, increasingly sensitive to charges of war-mongering and indictments of US–Vatican relations amid an increase in European anti-Americanism, Pius XII inclined towards neutralism. The development of the hydrogen bomb, followed by the death of Stalin, moved the pope toward coexistence, prompted further by the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the apparent readiness of the Americans to use them, as indicated by their policy of 'massive retaliation'.

By the end of 1955, the pope was warning the West about its indiscriminate opposition to any form of coexistence and indicating to the communist bloc his readiness to engage in dialogue. Positive Soviet responses to Pius XII's overtures led to a shift from the Vatican's alliance with the West toward non-alignment in order to reach an accommodation with the Soviet system. Prior to this, numerous Catholic organizations in the Soviet bloc reached a compromise with communist regimes that meant, in effect, state support for keeping faith alive. Pius XII tolerated self-identifying Catholic organizations behind the Iron Curtain that fully cooperated with communist regimes. Indeed, following the events of 1956, in Hungary and Czechoslovakia such was the co-optation of religion that by the 1960s it was the communist regimes not the Vatican that were decisive in episcopal appointments (Kosicki, 2014: 259–72). The 1960s witnessed Christian–Marxist engagement, John XXIII's *aggiornamento* and Paul VI's *Ostpolitik*, which signalled Vatican interest in Soviet bloc countries. The 1967 Papal Encyclical *Populorum progressio* reminded both powers of their responsibilities to the rest of the world.

Vatican II was a watershed in Catholicism's Cold War role, with a revolutionary effect on other faith organizations as well. John XXIII's supposedly stop-gap papacy became a revolutionary one with the 1959 call for an ecumenical council to update the place of the Church in the modern world. The Second Vatican Council, 1962–5, embraced freedom of conscience and dialogue. It was to transform Catholicism and relations between organized religion the world over. A defining tenet of ecumenism 'is an understanding of human society that identifies fear of the "other" as one of the greatest evils we face' (Ryan, 1994). Cold War historians agree that the Soviet threat was greatly exaggerated to facilitate 'fear of the other' as the key mobilizing resource in transforming the Soviet Union from a wartime ally against fascism into a demonic threat committed to destroying all freedoms and religions (May, 2017). Containment challenged the ecumenical ideal that demanded working toward the unity of all Christian churches, regardless of their location or political allegiances. Ecumenism required engagement and dialogue with churches in communist regimes.

Europe was the epicentre of the Cold War, geopolitically symbolized by the NATO–Warsaw Pact confrontation with its implicit threat of nuclear conflagration. While the simple concept of good versus evil carries extraordinary power in Christian thinking, the existence of nuclear weapons and the fact that Europe would be the theatre of superpower confrontation, tempered European attitudes, both secular and sacred, considerably. As more became known of the destructive capacities of nuclear weapons, Western European

Christians increasingly supported peace initiatives, once the preserve of their Eastern European counterparts. Western propaganda insisted the peace movement was a 'Soviet-inspired' ploy to weaken the West. Hence calls for banning the bomb were largely identified with radical priests and Soviet propaganda (Kirby, 2005: 185–201). As the 1960s unfolded, an increasingly critical attitude emerged within Western European churches toward Cold War policies. The rise of the American Christian Right, with its willingness to countenance a nuclear showdown, highlighted a major attitudinal divide towards peace between America and its transatlantic allies. Americans defiantly proclaimed: 'better dead than red'. Europeans, aware of their front-line location and not averse to electing socialists, inclined toward the more pragmatic 'better red than dead'. The Cuban Missile Crisis fuelled fear of mutually assured destruction and elicited a significant papal response: the head of the Catholic Church now proclaimed nuclear weapons must be banned. Following the Berlin and Cuban crises, John XXIII moved the Vatican into a more neutral Cold War stance. In 1963 *Pacem in terris* appealed for both powers to stop stockpiling nuclear arms.

## Behind the Iron Curtain

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Tatiana Chumachenko suggests that Stalin wanted to maintain the status quo in relations with the Church because it suited him. A repository of national traditions, the ROC served in the late 1940s as an ideological buttress to the state in the unfolding conflict against cosmopolitanism and 'servility in the face of foreign culture'. The manner in which the ROC extolled Stalin's leadership was perceived as a source of legitimacy for his regime at home and also abroad (Chumachenko, 2002: 101). Assessing the position of the Church in the early Cold War in a context that militated against the opening of new churches and for the closure of existing ones, Chumachenko concluded: 'it is impossible to consider the problem of church closure in the 1940s and 1950s solely as an aggressive policy of state authorities or as a policy directed toward nothing less than destroying the church' (Chumachenko, 2002: 110).

Whatever its long-term intentions towards religion, the Soviet state that emerged from the Second World War sought accommodation with rather than the eradication of religion (Pospelovsky, 1997: 139–62). The Second World War had impressed upon Stalin the value of closer church–state relations (Miner, 2003; Kirby, 2014b: 721–44). Pragmatic considerations determined the Soviet approach, including recognition that its religious record damaged its global appeal and provided an easy target for anti-communist propaganda. Hence, while religion may have been a mobilizing device for transformational purposes that could eventually be transcended, in the aftermath of the war Soviet generals and local communist leaders honoured Greek Orthodox clergy in the Balkans and courted Roman Catholic clergy in Poland.

Owing to a mix of domestic and foreign policy considerations, the Soviet regime supported and used the ROC to facilitate its assertion of political control over the liberated territories by curtailing indigenous nationalist movements and challenging Catholic power. Such was Stalin's anxiety over the latter that he insisted that reports on the Uniate Church, of which there were 1,754 in Ukraine, and the Vatican were sent directly to him (Dickinson, 2013: 23–36). A convergence of interest made the ROC complicit in aiding the Soviet government's 1946 'reunification' of the Uniate Church in Western Ukraine. The revocation of the 1596 Union of Brest-Litovsk, a long-cherished aim of the ROC, undid what had been achieved by Roman Catholic missionary activity and the expansion of Roman Catholic states into Eastern Europe where a corporate conversion strategy had brought Orthodox church communities, allowed to preserve local liturgy and tradition, under the authority of Rome.

From April 1949 the ROC actively participated in what the West derisively labelled the 'Soviet-inspired' peace movement. Religious leaders in the communist regimes were required to endorse the fight for peace. Compliance was initially eased by the widespread abhorrence of war after the region's appalling wartime suffering. It was subsequently sustained by the prospect of nuclear Armageddon. The death of Stalin

ushered in a difficult period for the new Soviet leaders, one which some historians have interpreted as a missed opportunity for the West in terms of resolving Cold War hostilities. The short-lived campaign against religion in 1954 reflected the new leadership's understanding that better relations with the West made any form of religious persecution exceedingly unwise. Plus, the complex problems facing the regime at home and abroad, meant that religion, policy towards it and the agencies responsible for implementing directives, were not a priority. However, the apparent flourishing of the ROC, indicated by an increase in clergy numbers and the printing of the Bible in 1956, for the first time under Soviet rule, caused unease among the ruling elites. Nikita Khrushchev, head of the party and government, considered that the construction of a communist future required, among other elements, freeing people's consciousness from religious prejudices and superstitions (Chumachenko, 2002: 149). The outcome was yet another anti-religious campaign that was not curtailed by negative reactions from the international community, nor by the ROC's international activism intended to mollify the government and see a resumption of better church-state relations.

p. 223 A number of communist regimes sought to construct alternative religious organizations loyal to communism. Although these attempts proved futile and were eventually abandoned, elements hostile to religion were strengthened by the Cold War. Western efforts to mobilize religion, including within the Soviet bloc, inevitably rendered religious individuals and their organizations as potentially subversive and reinforced the determination of communist regimes to control them and their relations with their Western counterparts. Matters were only worsened by Western claims that the faithful behind the Iron Curtain were potentially a fifth column (Lyons, 1954). It was of course such convictions and fears that led to the Soviet war in Afghanistan (December 1979–February 1989), that in turn contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the 'endless' wars that have since engulfed America and the West with devastating consequences for millions (Kirby, 2011).

Scholarship on religion behind the Iron Curtain has tended to focus on political repression. Religion exacerbated the central dilemma of Soviet leaders, the conflicting goals and interests caused by their dual leadership of the state and of international communism. The 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in October 1961, accepted a mission to build a communist society by 1980. An implicit part of this undertaking was that religion should cease to exist. However, it remains questionable to what extent this was considered a realistic prospect when, against the very principles they claimed to want, religion remained an integral component of Soviet foreign policy (Fletcher, 1973). The year the Berlin Wall was erected, 1961, was also the year the ROC joined the WCC, reflecting the extent to which the Soviets accepted ecumenical engagement as in their interests, that churches had a role in foreign policy abroad and social cohesion at home.

In Russia, where church-state links had always been strong, the Church from Peter the Great had been a de facto department of the Russian government with real temporal authority over censorship and education, plus it controlled vast amounts of land. In Eastern Europe, the tradition of Councils of Religious Affairs able to exercise censorship and control was strengthened in a Cold War context that exacerbated communist fears of religion as a subversive force. And, indeed, some European churches and religious organizations were implicated in activities of a highly political nature. Finnish Lutheran groups organized transportation of Bibles and Christian literature into the Soviet bloc in cooperation with active Christian groupings from other Western countries (Lauha, 2004). Reflecting concern about domestic subversion, communist regimes often used crude coercion to control religious institutions within their borders, despite knowing that willing cooperation was the more effective in terms of legitimacy, credibility, and utility. Religious leaders, forced by communist regimes to misrepresent the lack of tolerance and mistreatment accorded the faithful, suffered diminished influence at home and abroad, serving largely to confirm Western propaganda charges that churches behind the Iron Curtain that were not underground or actively in opposition to Soviet bloc regimes were accomplices or tools of communism.

Church–state relations varied tremendously throughout the Soviet sphere and era and did not fit into neat categories. With the exception of Albania, the importance accorded church–state relations by communist regimes, not to mention the state support they received, militated against the ‘withering away’ of religion according to the Marxist formula (Frey, 1989, 1–19; Tonnes, 1982: 242–55, 2008: 4–7). Yet Christian leaders in the West were under pressure to dismiss clergy and churches that cooperated with communist regimes, especially should they defend the Soviet bloc, as collaborators with atheism and godlessness (Kirby, 2019). As having the appearance of influence in Western church circles was an important bargaining tool for religious leaders in the Soviet bloc in their complex relationships with communist regimes, Western derision weakened their positions, making them vulnerable to domestic critics. One such was Agitprop in the Soviet Union, keen to limit the role of religion and promote ‘scientific atheism’ (Peris, 1998).

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Over time communist regimes acknowledged the futility of aggressive anti-religious campaigns, which proved notable failures. The militant atheism of the early Soviet period, revived during the Khrushchev era’s efforts to construct communist modernity, eventually succumbed to religious pluralism and freedom of conscience. Scientific atheism was abandoned under Mikhail Gorbachev. Communist leaderships learned that far from dying out, religion was persistent and resilient, challenging notions that it was retrograde and reactionary and incapable of modernizing. Religion as a lived experience proved ‘flexible, dynamic and rooted in Soviet life’, forcing the ideological establishment to recognize spiritual fulfilment as one of the state’s obligations to its citizens (Smolkin–Rothrock, 2014: 171–97). The continued adherence of numerous Soviet citizens to religion served to suggest a tolerance that was well received abroad, but which could at home be interpreted as bringing into question the foundation of communism, in so far as Soviet ideology promised a just and humane society that would render religion redundant. As a consequence, the policies toward religion of communist regimes throughout the Soviet era were marked by ambiguity, contradiction, and vacillation.

## Détente and decolonization

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During the course of the 1960s both Geneva and Rome underwent a reorientation as their focus shifted from Euro-American concerns to those in the developing world (Kosicki, 2014). The ideological contest at the core of the Cold War and the Manichean bipolar cosmos constructed by the USA, inevitably influenced religio-political policies and behaviour. Yet, as the narrative became less persuasive and was demonstrably in conflict with the churches’ universalist mission, significant recalibrations structured through non-binary frameworks emerged. The changes ushered in by the tumultuous decade of the 1960s meant the Cold War became but one in a pressing range of issues confronting the churches. With détente reducing the threat of nuclear conflict, organized religion East and West became more preoccupied with modernization, secularization, urbanization, youth culture, the sexual revolution, and a range of other concerns. The increasing importance of Christianity and Christian churches in the developing world was to temper the Cold War perspectives of their counterparts in the Western heartlands, particularly at a time when denominational boundaries were declining and there was growth in contacts between Christians and adherents of other faiths.

Globalization and secularization made European churches defensive, feeling a loss of power for themselves and even their national governments. Decolonization, the developing world, and race became important factors affecting West European church considerations. Just as atheism had been targeted by Western propaganda as the Achilles’ heel of the communist regimes, so racism and colonialism were targeted by anti-Western communist propaganda (Horne, 1999: 437–61; Arnesen, 2006: 13–52; McDuffie, 2011: 236–46). The mistreatment of African-Americans fuelled anti-American propaganda, while European racism, long a factor in European colonialism, increased at home as did migration from the former colonies.

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Communist pressure was perceived as particularly acute in the developing world as the churches negotiated the transition from traditional missionary activity to full partnership with sister churches, arguing that they had a 'moral debt' to discharge as members of the economically and culturally privileged West (McFarland and Johnston, 2009: 337–61). Notably, the churches offered a moral position rather than a political critique as they sought to lead in promoting the need to respond to the dire legacies bequeathed by colonialism confronted, as they were, by the deficient decolonization processes put in place by the Western powers.

A major change derived from the growing influence of church leaders from the developing world in global Christian affairs. Samuel Huntington once cogently observed: 'The West won the world not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion (to which few members of other civilizations were converted) but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence. Westerners often forget this fact; non-Westerners never do' (Huntington, 1996). Declining at home but growing throughout the developing world, which bore the brunt of the West's Cold War policies, Europe's churches had to confront the consequences. Youth sections were particularly outraged and demanded action. But it was the assumption of positions of importance in church hierarchies by non-Western Christian leaders that perhaps mattered most. Their experiences and input contributed to the radical criticisms and policies increasingly adopted by the WCC (Kirby, 2009: 203–30).

## Discretion and valour: the end of the Cold War

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Theoretically, the value Christian leaders attach to their prophetic role requires them to transcend political and social systems. Despite being subjected to domestic propaganda and often possessed of limited information regarding alternative perspectives regarding the position of the 'other' side, religious leaders understood the Cold War as a challenge to them all. For example, a book published under the auspices of the British Council of Churches in 1973 about religion in the Soviet bloc was titled *Discretion and Valour*. Western churchmen knew their words and actions could worsen the position of their counterparts behind the Iron Curtain. The Vatican, for example, diplomatically refrained from making public comment on the difficulties confronting the church in Albania, described by Trevor Beeson as the bleakest place in Europe for religion (Beeson, 1974: 281). For all the mistrust and suspicion engendered by the Cold War, <sup>4</sup> religious contacts and communications were maintained, delegations and messages exchanged. Hence, bridges were built and, very importantly, friendships formed that contributed to an essential sense of unity. In the Christian churches this was helped by theological dialogue, especially around questions of peace.<sup>5</sup> Despite their diversity and differences, European churches all stressed the importance of a Christian world view and ethos, as well as their respective social-ethical traditions, in calling for international peace, security and solidarity, as well as better living standards for peoples everywhere.

Certainly, there were institutional religious on both sides of the Iron Curtain who embraced the role of Cold War warrior, whether for patriotic reasons, ideological conviction, or personal ambition. Throughout Europe clergy with international contacts informed their respective foreign offices of news and developments in the religious arena, a choice in the West, a requirement in the East. Western churchmen considered their relationship with the church a partnership. Eastern churchmen had no such illusions (Leustean, 2010). The institutional religious in both camps had the potential to be rivals to as well as supporters of state power, to challenge as well as endorse established elites. Religions of all varieties, in the past and the present, have shown themselves ready to transgress the boundaries between the sacred and profane to protect and promote their own interests. Levels of church–state cooperation varied accordingly. Fundamentally, religion has the capacity to work with whatever regime will work with it. In Spain, Franco's authoritarian regime enjoyed good relations with the Catholic hierarchy. The Soviet Union illustrated how once a revolutionary government becomes established its conflict with religion as a stalwart of the status quo can cease and, however qualified, cooperation ensue. Eurocommunists, moreover, did not regard the

denial of religion as necessary and by the late 1960s there were Christians and Marxists throughout Europe who believed that each could learn from the other. The Italian Communist Party's 1979 programme stated: 'In the reality of the contemporary world, the Christian conscience can stimulate commitment to the struggle toward society's socialist transformation' (Mulazza-Giammanco, 1989: 70–1). This of course did not happen. The decreasing ideological persuasiveness of socialism as it departed from its own claims and objectives and failed to deliver material benefits, destroyed its legitimacy, and contributed greatly to the disintegration of the Soviet bloc.

p. 227 The transformation of 1989–90 was a European event, deeply influenced by European actors and processes (Bozo *et al.*, 2009). Rather than the so-called partnership between a born-again American president and a Polish pope, which so captured the popular imagination (Bernstein, 1992: 28–35; Schweizer, 1994; Bernstein and Politi, 1996), it was the Moscow–Rome connection that mattered more.<sup>6</sup> During a period of détente in the 1970s the Soviet embassy in Rome had established contacts with the Holy See, albeit not official relations. In 1980 Pope John Paul II (1978–2005) proclaimed Cyril and Methodius, representatives of the Eastern, Byzantine, Greek, Slav, and Russian traditions, patron saints of Europe. Moreover, John Paul II, advised against viewing all developments through the prism of East–West relations (Gayte, 2011: 717–36) and, as confirmed in his 1987 Papal Encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (John Paul II, 1987), he adhered to the course set by John XXIII and Paul VI.

Equally important, through peace focused Roman Catholic organizations such as Pax Christi, which from the early 1970s enjoyed good relations with the ROC, the Vatican had, in effect, back-channel conduits. One such was Etienne De Jonghe, secretary general of Pax Christi. The outcome of his activities as a 'go-between' led to the Vatican sending a high-level delegation to the ROC's 1988 millennium celebrations (Kirby, 2019b). Afterwards, Gorbachev visited John Paul II who welcomed *glasnost* and *perestroika*, stating: 'No-one should claim that the changes in Europe and the world happen according to the Western model. This is contrary to my profound convictions. Europe must breathe with both its lungs.' Subsequently, contacts were intense and frequent with the pope providing Gorbachev with 'messages of support and understanding in my most difficult hours' (Gorbachev, 1995: 509). The full extent of religious activism from the grassroots level up in facilitating the collapse of communism remains to be determined. Notably, however, the demise of the Soviet bloc did not usher in the 'truly rich inheritance' that the pope hoped the Church could secure in the post-communist world. Rather than a religious renaissance, churches confronted *kairos*: a time of challenge and danger, marked by extreme nationalism, anti-Semitism, and a period of acute instability.

## Conclusion

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Europe was exhausted and bankrupted by the two world wars and subordinate if not supplicant to one or other of the two new hegemonies, with their respective models of modernity: communism and capitalism. Religion was integral to neither. But although *realpolitik* rather than religious values determined the conduct of the Cold War on both sides of the ideological divide, *realpolitik* required policies that appeared palatable for popular consumption. In the context of the Western Cold War battle for hearts and minds, religion was a seemingly predictable and reliable stick with which to beat Soviet communism. Transforming religion into a site of contestation in the global struggle, the Truman administration sought to rally the world's religious and moral forces into an anti-communist crusade. The Soviet Union responded by mobilizing its own religious resources in the promotion of global peace. The ensuing contest witnessed a reversion to an age-old formula of reviving religious nationalism with the rationale objective of defending, in the Soviet case, and promoting, in the American case, their respective secular ideologies.

The religious cold war spawned by the West was a diverse, multidimensional, complex global phenomenon whose salience varied according to the stage of the Cold War, ↳ geographical location, cultural underpinnings, as well as national and local dynamics. It did not gain the same traction nor persist as long in Europe as it did in the USA, where it contributed to long-lasting changes in the religio-political landscape. Certainly, it would be wrong to underestimate the significance for European believers of the Cold War narrative of a cosmic struggle between Good and Evil. Nonetheless, religiously motivated antipathy towards communism did not prevent abhorrence of capitalist excess nor an appreciation of socialism's kinship with religious values.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, as Western Europe moved to the political left and the USA to the right, America's emphasis on a shared belief in God and religious values was intended to cement the transatlantic alliance. However, it also reinforced assumptions about the superiority of Western culture, inuring people to the stark reality of its darker side, its history of death and destruction, inflicted largely on the developing world. Brutal Western policies were justified as a 'lesser evil' than communism, blinding Western populations to the contradictory history of liberal thought from the enlightenment through the Cold War, confirming the convictions of victim populations of the West's wilful hypocrisy. It also prevented recognition of any benefits that might derive from the new communist regimes or indeed the Soviet economic umbrella. These were at least sufficient to allow Eastern European peoples to adapt to the prevailing power structure once they realized that while their Western counterparts were happy to indict Soviet 'occupation', they seemed unwilling to accept the risks entailed by substantive action to alleviate it. Over time, moreover, albeit within a Soviet imposed regional economic and military bloc, most managed to carve out a degree of autonomy that included preservation of spiritual convictions along with religious institutions and organizations.

The Cold War drama challenged organized religion throughout Europe but, as was the case down the centuries with previous conflicts and political changes, it negotiated a course through. Notably, the failure of communism was not a triumph for organized religion but for the neo-liberal project of deregulated market capitalism. Nonetheless and significantly, in the post-Cold War world organized religion retained a position of privilege—most European states continued supporting religious discourses, practices, institutions, mores, and belief and many religious organizations continued to seek close relations and influence within their respective regimes.



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## Notes

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- 1     For example, the Book of Acts: ‘everything they owned was held in common ... and it was distributed to each as had any need’. From the Magnificat: ‘He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.’
- 2     Western Europe, with variations of regulation and welfarism, followed the liberal-democratic, capitalist free-market model of modernization proffered by the United States; Eastern Europe the centrally planned economies of authoritarian state socialism imposed by the Soviet Union.
- 3     British commitment to Europe was insufficient to join in integrated political and economic structures. Moreover, unwilling to relinquish its global aspirations, Britain, followed by its churches, retreated from European integration.
- 4     There were of course Protestants who defended Catholics and accused their Protestant brethren of launching another anti-Catholic crusade. At the other extreme were Protestants who claimed that in addition to destroying democracy the Roman Church aspired to eventual world domination.
- 5     Research confirmed the notable theological depth of two bilateral theological dialogues between the German Protestant churches, in both East and West Germany, and the Russian Orthodox Church, which lasted from the late 1950s to 1990.
- 6     Christian Right triumphalism still insists it was Washington–Rome cooperation that tipped the scales against the rotting Soviet system (Farr, 2009).

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CHAPTER

## 13 Religion and Europe after the Fall of the Iron Curtain

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### Abstract

This chapter presents the situation regarding religion in the former communist countries of Eastern Europe and Russia after 1989. In much of the region, religious groups refused to sit back and watch passively as the politicians shaped their countries into Western-style liberal democracies, preferring instead to be actively involved in the process. Thus, religion has become an important actor in societies which otherwise could have secularized relatively fast, following the example of the Western democracies that the former communist countries were trying to emulate. Several issues are examined in order to illustrate how religion evolved after the fall of the Iron Curtain: these include dealing with the past, living with newly acquired religious freedom, nationalism and religion, religion and refugees, religious education in state schools, and sexuality and religion.

**Keywords:** [religious freedom](#), [nationalism](#), [refugees](#), [education](#), [sexuality](#), [Eastern Europe](#), [Russia](#)

**Subject:** [History of Religion](#), [Religion](#)

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THE phrase ‘Iron Curtain’ was first used by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in a speech at Fulton, Missouri, USA, on 5 March 1946, when he said of the communist states, ‘From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent’ (Churchill, 1946). The phrase was then taken to represent a political, military and ideological reality upheld by the Soviet Union in order to protect itself and the countries that fell under its sphere of influence from western capitalist ideology. Built by the Soviets to surround and isolate West Berlin in 1961, the Berlin Wall became a physical symbol of the ‘Iron Curtain’, and its collapse under pressure from the street protest in November 1989 enforced the view that the curtain had come to an end. In fact, the communist regimes of Central and Eastern Europe collapsed in a domino effect that began in June 1989 in Poland and ended with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

This chapter starts with a brief overview of communist-era persecution, it then considers religion in Europe after 1989 by looking at several important issues: these include religious freedom and revival, the way in which churches have dealt with their communist-era collaboration, nationalism and religion, religion and refugees, religious education in state schools, and sexuality and religion. Most of the former communist countries are members of the European Union (EU): Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia,

Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Several others (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and the Republic of North Macedonia) are in the process of joining the EU. Examples of issues pertaining to this chapter will be taken both from these categories and from Russia itself. The narrative will cover the evolution of religion which, after decades of atheist propaganda, came back with unexpected boldness, becoming a strong presence in much of the region.

## Communist persecution of religion

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During the communist period, religious freedom varied significantly from country to country, from religious group to religious group, and from early to late communism. In predominantly Christian Orthodox countries such as Russia, Ukraine, Romania, and Bulgaria the communists understood that, in order to impose their ideological and policy choices, they had to eliminate Western religious influences, including those of Roman and Greek Catholicism and Protestantism. Having quickly eliminated the anti-communist opposition within the majority Orthodox churches by resorting to massive arrests and mock trials, the communists chose to collaborate with these churches, while marginalizing the Catholics and the Protestants by curtailing their freedom of religion, abrogating Concordats that the Vatican had signed before 1945, closing down Catholic monasteries and theological schools, banning Catholic orders, imprisoning ministers who refused to collaborate, and limiting missionary and social activities.

The most persecuted were the Greek Catholics, former Orthodox believers who in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had accepted union with the Roman Catholic Church, embraced Roman Catholic dogma and recognized the authority of the pope in Rome, but who had preserved Orthodox ritual and allowed their priests to marry. On order from Moscow, and with the wide support of local Orthodox churches, who saw the occasion as long overdue moral compensation for having lost part of their flocks and places of worship to Catholicism, the communist authorities disbanded the Greek Catholic churches in Ukraine (1946), Romania (1948), and Czechoslovakia (1950). Greek Catholic priests and bishops were given the option to convert (and become Orthodox or Roman Catholic) or face imprisonment. Many of them chose the latter and never returned from prisons and labour camps.

In overwhelmingly Catholic Poland, the communists sought the collaboration of the Roman Catholic Church, which could not be easily eliminated because of its position as a 'folk church'. Collaboration was never a partnership of equals, since the communist authorities tried to divide, control, and humiliate the Church by introducing anti-religious subjects in the school curricula, forbidding most religious periodicals, censoring other religious publications, and adopting overt anti-religious legislation. Despite hostility towards religion, the authorities asked for the Catholic Church's support during the Polish anti-communist upheavals of 1956, 1970, 1976, and 1980. The election of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła as Pope John Paul II (1978–2005) was key to the eventual collapse of communism in Europe. As pope, he supported the Polish anti-communist opposition, especially the Solidarity Movement and its leader, Lech Wałęsa, who later became the first post-communist president of Poland.

## Religious freedom and revival after communism

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After the fall of the Iron Curtain the region experienced what was effectively a religious revival due largely to newfound religious freedom. As J. Christopher Soper explains:

After decades of communist rule, state sponsored antireligious campaigns, and the certain claims of social scientists that modernization meant the inevitable demise of religion, religious sentiment did not disappear in Eastern Europe. Despite efforts by the now-discredited communist regimes to



dismantle faith, religion reemerged in the region as a potent social and political force. Religion offered a meaningful ideology that helped fill the ideological void created by the popular rejection of communism, and religious groups in Eastern Europe gained a level of political legitimacy that they had not enjoyed in Western Europe for more than a century. (2011: xi)

Thus, the advent of democracy brought about unexpected religious growth in the countries belonging to the former Soviet bloc. People flocked to churches, mosques, and synagogues to celebrate their newly acquired freedom of worship; religious services started to be broadcast on national television and radio; priests were increasingly present on any imaginable occasion to provide blessings, to legitimize political careers, and to perform religious services; and churches demanded a role in shaping the region's new democracies. But since the early 1990s, levels of religiosity in the region have experienced not only peaks but troughs. The most recent and comprehensive survey of religiosity in Central and Eastern Europe by the respected US Pew Research Center reveals an interesting picture: a large majority of the population in the region considers itself religious, while also displaying low levels of religious observance measured as attendance on a weekly basis (Pew Research Center, 2017). The Czech Republic and Estonia stand out in terms of atheism, with 25 per cent and 9 per cent of citizens respectively identifying as atheists and 46 per cent and 35 per cent identifying their beliefs as 'nothing in particular' (Pew Research Center, 2017). At the other extreme are Poland and Romania where levels of religiousness remained close to 80 per cent well into the 2000s (Norris and Inglehart, 2004). All other countries fall somewhere between these extremes.

Former Soviet bloc countries, in order to be accepted in the EU, must meet a number of pre-accession criteria that point to their commitment to become liberal democracies, to demonstrate respect for human rights, and to join the capitalist economic union that the EU represents. They were obliged both to harmonize their legislation with that of the EU and to revisit much of their political, economic, and civic culture to bring their nation more in line with the liberal democracies they sought to become. Non-EU countries, such as Russia and Ukraine, did not undergo such a process, and are, therefore, regarded as weak democracies by Western standards (some scholars seriously doubt that there has been any attempt by Russia to become a democracy) (Dawisha, 2014), with many authoritarian elements still in place, as well as fewer rights and freedoms for their citizens. Freedom of religion is also curtailed in these countries, with only selected and historically important religious groups being given the right to worship and to enjoy government protection (Turcescu, 2013).

The Polish and Slovak constitutions have preambles that make explicit reference to God and/or the contribution of religion to the country's history. It is no coincidence that in both of these countries, religiosity has remained high since 1989. All the relevant constitutions guarantee freedom of religion, but the Bulgarian, Czech, and Slovak constitutions also protect the inviolability of atheistic (i.e. non-religious) views. In all post-communist countries that are members of the EU, freedom of religion includes the right to profess the faith in private and in public, without interference from state authorities, a right denied during communist times.

No post-communist constitution elevates the religious majority to the rank of state or national church, and all of them underline the equality of religious denominations; in practice, however, several countries treat denominations differently, depending on their contribution to nation- and state-building. Indeed, in practice the social position of the Catholic Church in Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and Lithuania, and of the Orthodox Church in Romania, differs significantly from the position of other churches, as is also the case of the Catholic Church in Italy or the Lutheran churches in Scandinavia (Stan and Turcescu, 2011).



## Dealing with the past

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The plight of the post-communist Christian churches is somehow similar to the plight of the early Christian church that for a long period was not officially recognized, and was heavily persecuted until the fourth century, only to become legal and to gain unprecedented privileges under Emperor Constantine I (r. 306–37). This analogy will be developed to explain the situation of religion after the fall of the ‘Iron Curtain’ in dealing with the past. After a period of religious persecution, history seems to repeat itself: societal reconciliation has to be attempted, puritanical voices are heard, and then particular churches find ways to impose themselves at the expense of other churches and religions.

Before the Edict of Milan (313), which guaranteed legal status for Christianity, the early Christian church had lived through painful persecutions which left serious and ugly scars onto what was considered to be the body of Christ (a theological image used for the church itself). Forced to surrender (*tradere* in Latin) their sacred texts to the Roman authorities and to offer sacrifices to the pagan deities, some Christians resisted, were tortured, survived, and came to be known as *confessores* in Latin, while others died and were referred to as martyrs (*martyres*); still other Christians (including some of their leaders, the bishops) gave in to the persecutor and came to be known as lapsed and traitors (*lapsi* and *traditores*). After the legalization of Christianity, when the issue of collaboration with or resistance to the persecutor was raised, religious leaders such as Bishop Donatus of Carthage (first half of the fourth century) insisted that only the ‘pure’ Christians (those who did not collaborate) could be members of the Church of Jesus Christ, a doctrine that was eventually labelled a heresy and rejected by the Church under the influence of Augustine of Hippo (354–430). Also, in the fourth century, Christianity gained numerous privileges granted by Emperor Constantine I and his successors as moral reparations owed by the Roman Empire to the new religion. In 380, under pressure from the church and motivated by the idea of imperial unity through uniformity, Emperor Theodosius I (r. 379–95) issued the decree *Cunctos Populos* (380) which declared that only orthodox and catholic Christianity was the official religion of the empire (Coleman-Norton, 1966: 2:534).

After the collapse of the communist regime Eastern European churches have had to confront issues of societal reconciliation, truth, and the healing of wounds caused by the human rights abuses perpetrated by the communist authorities. This was in a way similar to what happened in the fourth century following the Roman persecution of Christianity. The opening of the communist secret archives and the testimonies published by both victims and victimizers have gradually revealed the complex relations between churches and the communist state. Many priests, bishops, and pastors were unmasked as former collaborators with the secret police. They informed on their parishioners or colleagues, extracted information through the confessional, and handed it over to the secret police, and even recommended that fellow citizens who opposed the communist system be sent to gaols, labour camps, forced domicile, or psychiatric hospitals.

In Bulgaria allegations of collusion with the repressive communist regime by religious leaders, the clergy, and the faithful led to a split in the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. In 1992, the schismatic Bulgarian Orthodox Church–Alternative Synod, supported by the United Democratic Forces government, declared that Patriarch Maxim’s (1971–2014) election was invalid, noncanonical, and politically supported by communist dictator Todor Zhivkov, and called for his replacement and that of the Holy Synod with a Provisional Synod under Metropolitan Pimen of Nevrokop. The Alternative Synod itself embraced bishops (including Pimen himself), who were as tainted by collaboration with the communist authorities as Maxim. By 2010, however, all the dissenting bishops repented and were reinstated by Maxim (Stan and Turcescu, 2011).

Church leaders have been haunted by their communist past in other countries as well. The opening of the Stasi files showed that the Evangelical churches, hailed for their instrumental role in bringing down the communist regime in the former German Democratic Republic, had been misguided in seeking accommodation with communist policies and Marxist ideology, and had neglected their prophetic duty to

resist tyranny and injustice (Conway, 1994). Early in 2007, Polish Bishop Stanisław Wielgus confessed to having collaborated with the Polish communist political police and announced his decision to resign at a service to install him as the new Archbishop of Warsaw. His public confession followed a number of press reports uncovering his tainted past. Shortly after, the principal priest of Kraków Cathedral, Father Janusz Bielanski, stood down ↵ for the same reason. To deal with the crisis created by such prominent confessions, the Polish Council of Bishops decided in 2007 to investigate the clergy's collaboration with the communist regime more systematically (Mackay, 2007). Despite these high-profile examples, however, past collaboration with the communists has not deterred the faithful from returning to places of worship and forgiving their church leaders. That said, the successive public scandals revolving around this topic have tainted the reputation and social status of religious denominations, convincing many irreligious Eastern Europeans that the freedom of religion accorded to priests and prelates should be directly proportional to their anti-communist sentiments.

## Nationalism and religion

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As a major Pew Research Center Survey discovered in 2017, religion is strongly correlated with national identity in many post-communist countries, despite the fact that many of these countries embrace the EU as a transnational project. Thus, being Orthodox or Catholic respectively is part of being 'truly Russian' or 'truly Polish'. This 'is also the case in Greece, where the church played a central role in Greece's successful struggle for independence from the Ottoman Empire and where today three-quarters of the public (76 per cent) say that being Orthodox is important to being "truly Greek" ' (Pew Research Center, 2017).

The Pew researchers asked about 'national pride, cultural superiority and various aspects of national identity', revealing that in predominantly Orthodox countries people are prouder about their nationality than they are elsewhere. In all the Orthodox countries in the region, at least 50 per cent of adults indicate pride in their nationality, with Georgia ranking the highest at 78 per cent followed by Greece at 72 per cent while Russia at 52 per cent and Moldova at 50 per cent are the lowest (Pew Research Center, 2017). Interestingly, the Pew survey also found a strong correlation between being religious and voicing strong pride in national citizenship. A case in point highlighted by the survey is Romania, where the difference (35 points) is the highest between those who say that religion is very or somewhat important (57 per cent) and those who say that religion is not too or not at all important (22 per cent) in their lives (Pew Research Center, 2017). Romania was very nationalistic until it joined the EU in 2007. Thereafter, with many more Romanians being able to travel and work in the EU, percentages relating to national pride dropped to 54 per cent.

There is no consensus when it comes to defining nationalism. It has been understood variously: as an ideology based on the individual's overwhelming loyalty to the nation-state; a cultural awareness or civic-mindedness; the idea that political and cultural units should be congruent; as well as an ideology or a movement that makes political claims on behalf of a nation or on the basis of an imaginary national identity (Ramet, 1997). Scholars note and minorities experience nationalism's deadly power to divide, recognizing that nationalism creates advantages solely for the majority population. ↵ The scholarly literature dealing with nationalism as an ideology promoting loyalty to the nation-state has, moreover, distinguished between Western and Eastern European expressions of this. Thus, Paul Latawski refers to the 'political', 'social', and 'territorial' nationalism of the West, and the 'ethnic' nationalism of the East (Latawski, 1995). Martin Rady adds that, in the West, notions of nationhood were grafted onto older concepts of citizenship, natural rights, and popular sovereignty, all protected by strong states. In the East, by contrast, these concepts were less developed and modern nations lacked the civic and political institutions to protect them when they emerged in the nineteenth century. As a result, the nation subsumed the individual, and civic rights took second place to the doctrine of national rights (Rady, 1995).

In Romania, to take but one example, nationalism has been present in the Eastern Orthodox religious discourse and practice before, during and after communism. While aiding the nation-building process, it did so by promoting an understanding of the Romanian nation as an Orthodox nation. Nationalism still played a significant role in Romanian politics during the first decade of post-communism but subsided when Romania joined the EU and Romanians began travelling and working abroad. However, nationalist discourses have re-emerged in 2018 on the hundredth anniversary of the creation of Greater Romania. And in the 1990s, the Romanian Orthodox Church (RomOC) used nationalism to restore its credibility, which had been affected by its collaboration with the communist regime. The Church's discourse underscored the link between Orthodoxy and being Romanian, and the importance of preserving Romanian identity in the face of growing modernization, globalization, secularization, EU integration, and religious competition. Nationalist messages were delivered through pastoral letters, public declarations by the clergy, theological publications, and the statements released by organizations set up under the Church's aegis. One spectacular manifestation of nationalism occurred on 21 June 1992, when the Holy Synod, RomOC's collective leadership body, undertook the canonization of nineteen Romanian saints and declared the second Sunday after Pentecost the 'Sunday of the Romanian Saints'.

In addition, the RomOC unilaterally established the Bessarabian Metropolitanate in 1992 in the independent Republic of Moldova as an additional nationalist enterprise, in the hope that the Republic of Moldova (Basarabia, as it is often referred to in Romania) would one day reunite with Romania, as was the case between the two world wars. The establishment of a religious institution in another country led to a ten-year conflict between the new Metropolitanate and successive Moldovan governments, tense relations between Bucharest and Chişinău, and sensitive relations between the Romanian Patriarchate (which created the new Metropolitanate) and the Patriarchate of Moscow (under whose jurisdiction the Orthodox living in the Republic of Moldova traditionally fell) (Stan and Turcescu, 2007).

Another legacy of the past impacted by nationalism is the RomOC's difficult relationship with Romania's Jews. As Romania was an ally of Nazi Germany from 1940 until 1944, the RomOC has had a chequered relationship with the country's Jewish minority and actively participated in the Holocaust (International Commission, 2004; Popa, 2017). Through the decisions and actions of its leaders (the patriarch, the Synod, and various anti-Semitic bishops) as well as individual priests, the RomOC was a perpetrator, not a saviour or bystander in the unfolding tragedy that affected the country's Jewish and Roma populations. After the Second World War, the RomOC denied its role in the persecution of Jews and even tried to cast itself as their defender. And after 1989, numerous political figures continued to deny that the Holocaust had happened in Romania. However, the 2004 Elie Wiesel Commission Final Report confirmed that the Holocaust did happen in that country and that 280,000 to 380,000 Romanian and Ukrainian Jews lost their lives in Romanian-controlled territories, especially Transnistria (International Commission, 2004). Since 1989 the RomOC has never undertaken a critical analysis of its attitude towards Jews (Popa, 2017).

While religion arose more or less turbulently but definitely not violently from the ashes of communism in most countries of the former Soviet bloc, mention should be made of the situation in the former Yugoslavia. Here religion and nationalism intersected with extreme violence during the Yugoslav Wars (1991–2001): Catholics in Croatia, Bosnia, and Slovenia, and Muslims in Bosnia and Kosovo, clashed with Orthodox Serbs. Indeed, in the last decade of the twentieth century, nationalism and religion formed a potent and deadly mix. But according to keen observers of the region, these were not wars of religion as such, but wars that manipulated religion for political hegemony. In the words of Sabrina P. Ramet:

When Serbs blew up mosques and Catholic churches and when Croats destroyed mosques and other religious buildings, they were not, in fact, doing so to spread their own faith, but rather to destroy the architectural artifacts which established other peoples' history in the area and which helped members of other nationalities remember their past and hold on to their cultural identities.

That observation might be true for buildings, but when it comes to humans, each religious group targeted other religious groups with a view to destruction; the process, moreover, had long historical roots going back at least to the Second World War and perhaps even to the formation of Yugoslavia in 1918. It is a highly complex phenomenon that survivors of the Wars of Yugoslavia and their descendants still struggle to understand.

## Churches and refugees

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p. 241 After 1989, many former Soviet bloc citizens were able to travel to Western Europe to work or to settle there as migrants.<sup>1</sup> Although this east-to-west migration was quite sizeable in the case of some Eastern European populations, it was generally welcome by both the countries from which the migrants originated, as they sent money to their poorer families back home, and the destination countries, which welcomed the influx of cheap but skilled labour needed to fill various gaps in their job markets. After 2000, however, Eastern European countries themselves became a destination for refugees and migrants from the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Beginning in 2015 a large (some say the largest since the Second World War) refugee crisis erupted. Its multiple causes included the civil war in Syria (ongoing since 2011), the terrorist organization known as the Islamic State (Daesh) which had seized control of large swathes of land in Iraq, Syria, and Libya, and the economic consequences of climate change. Due to the sheer number of people trying to enter Europe, the refugee crisis has raised serious issues for the entire continent, dividing countries and leading to political shifts. Its impact will continue for years to come. In this context, churches in Eastern Europe had to respond to the new influx of people. It is clear that their responses were at times very conservative, leading them to reject the refugees, and even to refuse any sort of protection.

True, no country in this world has an open-border policy, as some journalists and left-leaning academics would have us believe. However, assisting refugees from conflict zones or those fleeing dictatorships is an obligation that many have taken seriously during the course of human history. Article 14 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (of 1948) enshrined the right to asylum in another country as a human right for those fleeing persecution at home. That right has been upheld by later international conventions on refugees.

In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the Catholic bishops adopted negative decisions towards refugees following their 21 February 2017 joint meeting in Bratislava, emphasizing that 'the whole history of humanity shows how uncontrolled migration causes violence and conflict, as well as economic and cultural collapse' and that preference for resettlement should be given to Christian refugees. Some bishops present at the meeting alleged that Islam and Christianity were still in 'permanent conflict' despite efforts at dialogue and that the threat of terrorism increased with a larger presence of Muslims in non-Muslim countries. Polish Catholic bishops also displayed a lukewarm reaction to refugees, arguing in particular against Muslims and urging them to avoid Christian countries such as Poland where they would not feel at home (Luxmoore, 2017). The Polish Bishops' Conference, the Church's decision-making body, in its 8 September 2015 statement wrote: 'The assistance is necessary for those who suffer as a result of wars in their countries. ... In Poland the main initiative and responsibility lies on the shoulders of the secular authorities. It is they who are the inviting side' (Pędziwiatr, 2018: 467). And according to a study concerning attitudes towards Muslim refugees among Poland's Catholic bishops and seminarians, there is a marked difference between the more welcoming attitude present in the official statements toward Muslims, on the one hand, and the anti-Muslim sentiments embraced by the seminarians, who are the future Catholic priests of the country, on the other. These anti-Muslim sentiments are fuelled by the media hype against Islam but also by the Islamist terrorist attacks perpetrated in various countries since 11 September 2001, in

p. 242 which some Polish citizens lost their lives. ‘The Polish public has voiced some of the strongest dissent in Europe against taking in refugees fleeing the war-torn Middle East, and continues to express one of the highest rates of fear of Muslims among European countries’ (Pędziwiatr, 2018: 462). In Hungary, most bishops have avoided dissenting from Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s tough stance against refugees. This reaction from Catholic bishops in Central and Eastern Europe is in many ways surprising, given that on 6 September 2015, Pope Francis called on every Catholic parish and religious community to host at least one refugee family in order to assist them at the peak of the refugee crisis (Luxmoore, 2017). Responding to this call, numerous Catholic charitable organizations and religious orders provided serious assistance to the refugees.

Orthodox churches have been somewhat more welcoming to refugees, with the Patriarch Bartholomew (Archontonis) I of Constantinople (1991–) urging European states to open their arms to refugees (Voice of America, 2016), and ordinary Orthodox Christians in Greece doing their best even in times of financial crisis to offer some help to the large numbers of refugees flooding into Greece on their way to Northern Europe’s richer countries. The RomOC also provided some assistance to the relatively few refugees present in Romania (Ioniște, 2017). The Bulgarian Orthodox Church urged the government not to admit any more refugees, while committing to assist the ones already present in the country (Bulgarian News Agency, 2015).

Traditionally countries of emigration, predominantly Orthodox countries have now become countries of immigration themselves. This change has created challenges for their church–state relations and also an increase in their religious pluralism to which, unlike predominantly Catholic or Protestant countries of Western Europe, they are not accustomed. The Dublin III Regulation 604 of 2013 introduced the requirement that a refugee seeking asylum in the EU should apply for it in the country where he or she has first entered the EU, on the understanding that the state in question will be responsible for accepting or rejecting the application. Under this regulation, Greece and the Greek Orthodox Church have been criticized for not doing enough for the asylum seekers. But using its Ecumenical Refugee Programme, the Greek Orthodox Church has provided humanitarian help and assistance to enormous numbers of refugees. So much so that the influx has increased the country’s Muslim population by several hundreds of thousands, thus challenging the traditional dominant position of the Orthodox Church (Stoeckl, 2014).

## The return of religious education to state schools

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p. 243 All post-communist EU members provide religious instruction in state schools in one form or another. After 1989, in reaction to decades of anti-religious campaigns, the introduction of religion in the school curriculum was among the earliest and most strongly advocated demands put forth by religious denominations, the general public, and some politicians in Eastern Europe. But the way in which religion is taught differs widely across the region.

Slovenia comes closest to respecting a strict separation of church and state. The country allows ‘education about religion’ in state schools (in years 7 to 9), but such classes are not offered by religious denominations, and therefore they do not include catechism and are not faith-based. Teachers may not be ordained priests, and the curriculum blends religion and ethics, and is taught from a religious studies, not a theological, perspective. Similarly, in Hungary religious classes can take place on school premises after regular classes, without being integrated in the school curricula. All other countries permit religious instruction in primary and secondary schools, and allow it to be done confessionally, even in the form of catechesis.

‘Elective-compulsory’ is a concept used in several post-communist EU member states. It means that, although religious education is an elective subject, if it is required by a minimum number of parents, state schools are obliged to offer it. Thus, religion classes are elective for the students, who may opt out of them, but compulsory for the schools, if certain conditions are met. The strictest in this respect is Bulgaria where



parents and/or students had to provide a justification for not attending the religion class (arguing, for example, that the class runs against the parents' convictions), and submit written requests for deregistration to school principals. Until 2014, Romania insisted informally that the study of religion in state schools is mandatory, despite the fact that the mandatory teaching of religion goes against current international human rights legislation, to which Romania is a signatory (Stan and Turcescu, 2007). On 12 November 2014, however, the Romanian Constitutional Court went against its own earlier Decision No. 306 of 27 March 2012 and ruled that article 9 of Education Law 84 of 1995 and article 18 of Education Law 1 of 2011 are unconstitutional (Constitutional Court of Romania, Decision 669 of 12 November 2014), thus forcing parents who want their children to study religion to opt in (rather than out), that is, to register explicitly for those classes on an annual basis.

While some countries aim for non-confessional religious instruction in state schools, in practice denominations are involved in the preparation of teaching materials, approval of curriculum, and vetting of teachers. This includes Slovenia, where church representatives sit on the Curriculum Commission which approves the Religion and Ethics course syllabus. One sympathetic observer described the challenges of teaching religion in state and church schools in Poland, where the same curriculum, endorsed by the Catholic Church, is used:

[I]t becomes increasingly difficult to accomplish all functions of catechesis, that is teaching, educating and Christian initiation. The largest difficulties occur with the last function that visualises deepening of students' personal faith. As far as this concept is concerned, faith can be supported in Catholic schools less and less frequently, while in case of public schools, it becomes totally impractical. The main obstacle is low religiousness of students, who ever more frequently lack the basic knowledge of Christianity and personal religious experience. Therefore, they expect the religious education to answer their personal existential dilemmas, concerning the meaning of life and pursuit of happiness, as well as a discussion on topics related to the very existence of God, or credibility of other religions.

(Małkosa, 2016: 172)

It is clear that some countries took longer than others to introduce religious instruction in state schools after 1989, depending on the population's religiousness and pressure exerted by the religious groups on their respective governments. For example, the Czech Republic did not do this until 1998. What makes the Czechs stand out among their Central and Eastern European neighbours, moreover, is the fact that there are over eighty church schools funded by the government, which in many ways serve as 'elite state schools', because admission is based solely on standardized entrance exams. Teachers in these church schools can be atheists or belong to any denomination, as long as their primary allegiance is to the church that acts as the school patron. Curiously, religious education in these schools is optional instead of required, as one would expect. The church provides the building where classes are organized and screens the teachers, who must seek the approval of the Ministry of Education (Fox, 2008: 153).

## Sexuality and religion

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Beginning in 1989, after decades of atheism in which they had no say in the regulation of human sexuality, religious denominations became very engaged in the subject, considering communist morality to be problematic and in need of reform. Numerous churches took issue with the legalization of abortion and homosexual behaviour, the ever-increasing use of family planning, artificial insemination, and other reproductive technologies. After decades of isolation from the international community and strict state control, the churches were hard pressed to formulate official positions with respect to a wide number of issues related to sexuality and sexual behaviour. Not surprisingly, churches were at a loss when called upon to speak on sensitive issues that in Eastern Europe were new not only to them, but also to the general public, the political elite, and the local academic community. As a result, it took some time for churches to draft official pronouncements, and the majority of them have yet to do so.

When discussing sexuality and religion, many pro-choice advocates mention the limitation of human rights when religions act to limit abortion. While abortion is not a human right as such, its restriction under certain circumstances infringes on selected rights of girls and women. These include the rights: to life, to health and health care, to information, to non-discrimination and equality, to be free from cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment, to privacy, to decide the number and spacing of children, to security of the person, to liberty, to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress, and to the freedom of conscience and religion. In this section, three examples of churches that have dealt with human sexuality will be considered: the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), the Romanian Orthodox Church, and the Roman Catholic Church in Poland.

p. 245 Two of the largest Orthodox churches in the region, the ROC and the RomOC, recognized that a continued reliance on Canon law to deal with sexuality was no longer sufficient both because canons were drafted over 1,500 years earlier, and thus were silent on such modern issues such as artificial insemination or in vitro fertilization, and because canons themselves were never fully codified, using different definitions and prescribing different penances for the same sexual behaviour. The two churches drafted pioneering documents for Orthodoxy in general, presenting their official positions on important social issues, including sexual behaviour. *The Basis of the Social Concept* (Russian Orthodox Church, 2000) was adopted by the Jubilee Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church in August 2000, while *Abortion* was approved by the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church in July 2005 (Stan and Turcescu, 2007; Stan, 2010).

Chapter 10 of *The Basis of the Social Concept* (Russian Orthodox Church, 2000), 'Personal, Family and Public Morality', reaffirmed the ROC's respect for common-law marriage, thus upholding the Holy Synod decision of 28 December 1998, which, surprisingly, scolded spiritual fathers who 'declare common-law marriage invalid or demand that spouses, who have lived together for many years but were not married in church ... should divorce' or 'identify such marriage with fornication'. The new document reminded the clergy that marriage in church was rendered difficult by the adoption of the Decree of the Separation of the Church from the State in 1918, with the prohibition being lifted only seven decades later. While reaffirming that marriage is a union of a man and a woman, thus excluding same-sex marriages, the Church adopted a moderate view on divorce, again upholding its 1998 decision to denounce the actions of those spiritual fathers who 'prohibit their spiritual children from contracting a second marriage ... and prohibit married couples from divorce if their family life becomes impossible'. It stressed that fornication 'ruins the harmony and integrity of one's life', while pornography 'contributes to the suppression of the spiritual and moral principles, thus reducing man to an animal motivated by instinct alone', but the Church does not 'abhor the body or sexual intimacy as such'.

Chapter 12, 'Problems of Bioethics', equated abortion with murder, therefore 'from the moment of conception any encroachment on the life of a future human being is criminal'. The widespread use of

abortion by modern societies was seen as ‘a threat to the future of humanity and a clear sign of its moral degradation’. Under no circumstances can the Church bless abortion, but ‘in case of a direct threat to the life of the mother if her pregnancy continues’, leniency was recommended. Contraceptives with abortive effect were condemned, but ‘other means, which do not involve interrupting an already conceived life, cannot be equated with abortion’. The document once again referred to the December 1998 decision, which instructed clergy serving as spiritual guides that ‘it is inadmissible to coerce or induce the flock to ... refuse conjugal relations in marriage’ as a contraception method. In the case of infertile couples, artificial insemination with the husband’s sperm was admissible, ‘since it does not violate the integrity of the marital union’, while all other practices—such as the use of donated cells, surrogate motherhood, and in vitro fertilization involving embryos—were strongly rejected. Equally condemned were homosexuality and the cloning of human beings, deemed to represent ↵ ‘a definite challenge to the very nature of the human being and to the image of God inherent in him’, but not ‘the cloning of isolated organic cells and tissues’ (Stan, 2010: 43).

*Abortion* was drafted by the National Commission on Bioethics set up at the request of the RomOC. To ground its work in theological dogma, the Romanian text included frequent references to the biblical texts and early Christian canons. The commission included five theologians, five scientists, one sociologist, and one law graduate, in an effort to bridge the gap between the view of the Church and the positions of the scientists and legal experts. According to the document, ‘abortion and all abortive practices are grave sins because they a) lead to the murder of a human being, b) affect the dignity of the woman, c) raise the risk of mutilation of the woman’s body, or the premature death of the young mother’. The same document listed four significant instances when abortion is allowed, according to RomOC, and this is a significant advance in the position of this Church. First, when the life of the mother is threatened by the pregnancy or birth, ‘priority must be given to the woman’s life, not because it has a greater intrinsic value, but because of her ties to and responsibilities toward other people who depend on her’. Second, in the case of a genetically abnormal foetus, ‘the decision belongs to the family [to carry the pregnancy to term] after the physician and father confessor have informed them of all the moral and practical implications’. Third, if the pregnancy is the result of rape, ‘the child must be born and, if needed, put up for adoption’. Lastly, ‘abortion can never be morally justified by the economic status of the family, the disagreements between spouses, its impact on the mother’s career or the physical aspect [of the mother]’. Going a step further, the document recognized that the burden of preventing abortion must be shared by the parents and the Orthodox Church, whose pastoral and social activity ‘must be diversified’ to better educate the public (Stan and Turcescu, 2007: 185–6; Stan, 2010: 44).

In Poland, one of the Catholic Church’s post-communist priorities was to ban abortion, which it considered sinful at any given time after conception. Until 1989, abortion was easily available and there were 180,000 to 300,000 abortions every year. Pope John Paul II made the regulation of sexuality one of the central aspects of his papacy and the Polish bishops acted in tandem with him on this issue. The 1993 Abortion Act allowed abortions only in exceptional cases: (a) when the pregnancy threatened the life or health of the pregnant woman; (b) when medical evidence indicated a high probability of severe and irreversible disability to the foetus or an incurable illness threatening its life; and (c) when the pregnancy resulted from a crime like incest or rape. In these cases, pregnancy can be terminated by week twelve and the mother’s written consent is essential (The Romanian Orthodox Church, no date).

The 1993 Act requires that the state provide citizens with free access to ‘methods and means serving conscious procreation including intra-uterine devices and emergency methods’ (Zielinska, 2008: 10). The ‘conscience clause’ of the Act on the Physician’s Profession allows physicians to refuse to provide medical services in violation of their conscience, unless there is a situation of emergency or one in which a delay in providing medical aid could cause a danger of loss of life, severe harm to the body, or severe impact on health. The clause is widely used by physicians to justify a refusal to prescribe ↵ contraceptive pills and to perform even legally allowed abortions, and to try to influence the women to avoid contraception. The



Ministry of Health has funded a Catholic-supported programme on natural family planning (Zielinska, 2008; IFHR, 2018).

Despite guarantees for abortion in exceptional cases, women's rights activists have documented numerous violations. Women with disabilities or whose health was endangered were pushed to give birth and denied the right to abortion, although they qualified for this right. Several times after 1989, and especially since the Law and Justice Party (PiS) returned to power in 2015, women and their supporters protested against the ban on abortion and accused the Polish government of kowtowing to the Catholic Church on women's rights issues. It is worth noting that despite legislative fights and a formal ban, the number of abortions in the country has remained similar to communist times (Nowicka, 2008; IFHR, 2018).

Homosexuality has been equally contentious in Poland. While homosexual activity was legalized in that country as early as 1932, homosexuals still face discrimination from the wider society and many politicians known to be gay have stepped down quietly for fear of being publicly exposed, a move that would bring their political careers to a halt. Article 18 of the 1997 Constitution expressly recognized marriage as the 'union of a man and a woman' (Constitution of Poland). According to a major study of abortion and LGBT+ rights in Poland, since the PiS government came to power in 2015 'the degradation of the rule of law in Poland, and the weight given to the Catholic Church has induced heightened intolerance towards LGBT+ persons' (IFHR, 2018: 11).

## Conclusion

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This chapter has examined religion in Central, Eastern Europe, and Russia after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989–91. Following a short introduction to the persecution of religion under communism and the revival of religion after communism's demise, it has looked briefly at issues that pertain to dealing with the past. Then, using a range of examples from countries in the region, it has considered topics such as nationalism and religion, religion and refugees, religious education in state schools, and sexuality and religion.

Nationalism is frequently linked to religion, and a number of Eastern European countries that joined the EU have continued to display nationalistic tendencies. When it comes to refugees, reactions have been mixed, with some churches being more welcoming than others. Most countries—with the notable exception of Greece—were not, however, faced with a large influx of refugees who were more interested in heading for the richer countries of Western Europe. The reintroduction of religious education in state schools has been perhaps the most successful achievement of churches in the region. While most take a somewhat relaxed approach to the teaching of religion, some churches feel very strongly that religion should be part of the curriculum, even though ↵ they cannot make it mandatory, due to international protections for the freedom of conscience and religion. Generally, churches in the region prefer to take an active stance when it comes to democracy and want to have a say in how various issues are dealt with. For example, while most churches are not interested in regulating sexuality, the few that are proactive in this sphere tend to be conservative, encouraging the banning of abortion and dismissing homosexuality, while favouring traditional family values.

The role of religion in the region changed considerably after the collapse of the communist regime. On the one hand, states granted citizens the freedoms of religion and conscience and religious denominations the right to a presence in public affairs; on the other, churches tried to reclaim their pre-communist political clout. Given their similar communist past, characterized by long-term anti-religious campaigns, repression, and state abuse, and by comparable regime changes experienced in 1989 or 1991 (which, with the exception of Romania, were relatively peaceful and swift), the post-communist EU members and those former communist countries that are not in the EU share many common characteristics with respect to the

role of religion in society. At the same time, distinctive historical legacies and the details of post-communist political design explain some notable variations across the region.

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## Notes

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- 1 According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), also known as the UN Refugee Agency, a distinction should be made between 'refugees' and 'migrants': 'Refugees are persons fleeing armed conflict or persecution ... [while] migrants choose to move not because of a direct threat of persecution or death, but mainly to improve their lives by finding work, or in some cases for education, family reunion, or other reasons', 'UNHCR viewpoint: "Refugee" or "Migrant"—Which Is Right?' (11 July 2016) available at <https://www.unhcr.org/55df0e556.html>.

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CHAPTER

## 14 Religion–State Relations in Europe

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### Abstract

Europe is often taken to represent a global exception in matters of religion and secularity and some argue that much of the reason for this lies in the way religion–state relations are arranged. This chapter assesses these and related claims while summarily tracing the character, development, and impact of different relationship patterns in Europe as both ‘religion’ and ‘state’ have undergone massive change over the last 500 years. None of the fifty–odd current states of Europe meet any strict standard of religion–state separation; it can be argued nonetheless that the emergent and identifiable common European model is largely consistent with liberal egalitarian values. Key concepts are introduced: secular state, confessional state, religious state, religious establishment, and separationism.

**Keywords:** [secular state](#), [confessional state](#), [religious state](#), [religion-state relations](#), [religious establishment](#), [separationism](#)

**Subject:** [History of Religion](#), [Religion](#)

**Series:** [Oxford Handbooks](#)

IT has become something of a commonplace in recent years that modern Europe represents a global exception in matters of religion and secularity (Casanova, 1994; Davie, 2002). Some authors, such as Charles Taylor, attach the ‘judgement of secularity’ to the whole of the West, while others emphasize contrasts between different parts of Europe (Byrnes and Katzenstein, 2006; Taylor, 2007) or between Europe taken as a whole and the USA (Berger, Davie, and Fokas, 2008). One of the marks of distinction of ‘Europe: the exceptional case’ is the claim that ‘in the very diverse legal arrangements between Church and State, there is a common thread which binds together almost all European societies in terms of their religious behaviour’ (Davie, 2002: 2). Cutting across and enlivening debates about these arrangements, in recent decades an influential American school of ‘rational choice’ sociologists of religion has held up Europe as the classic illustration of the thesis that most of the features by which secularity is conventionally measured are causally inter-related, with a key determinant being the overriding influence of different patterns of mutual entanglement in European religion–state relations (Young, 1997).

What follows assesses these and related claims while summarily tracing the character, development, and impact of different relationship patterns in Europe as both ‘religion’ and ‘state’ have undergone massive change over the last 500 years, each in its own incipiently separate sphere and in various modes of mutual juxtaposition—as well as, most notably, in their relative capacity to exercise authority over, or influence in, Europe’s national host societies. The modern understanding of the key terms themselves, as they are now generally received—if also contested—across the world, can be shown themselves to be the product of changes which occurred uniquely in Latin Christian Europe after approximately 1500 (Asad, 2003). While any historic system of rule over a delimited territory might be taken to have constituted some sort of a state, the state in its modern form was a distinctive product of European developments before it was extended more or less forcefully across the globe in what Charles Tilly calls ‘the dominant political fact of the last 1,000 years’ (Tilly, 1990). Modern national states as such only began to come into existence in early modern Europe around the same time that the word ‘state’ itself came into use (d’Entrèves, 1967). Somewhat later, usage of the term ‘religion’ which had a much longer prehistory as denoting general piety or, more narrowly, the regulated life of monasteries and other ‘religious houses’, only took on the modern sense of systems of internal belief with related practices in seventeenth-century Protestant Europe. Alternatively put, it can be claimed that, as used in the West at least, the very terms religion and state with their modern denotations and connotations are twin products of the particular circumstances of early modern Europe.

For most of the last 500 years since they took on their modern meanings the different patterns of relations between states and religions have been the subject of scholarly controversy among historians, lawyers, sociologists, political scientists, moral philosophers and, not least, students of religion. Much of the controversy has surrounded contrasting juridical and/or empirical claims as to how these relations are to be identified, described, and analysed as they have developed and changed across time and space, while philosophers have focused in addition on the more normative issues as to how different sets of arrangements are to be justified—or not. From the *politiques* of the sixteenth century to contemporary liberal philosophers, such as John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas, the debate has continued with a vigour which has only been heightened in recent years by the resurgence and renewed salience in politics of religion or religion-related issues. For many Western liberals a long-standing trope has been the claim that it was reaction to the climactic events of the post-Reformation period which laid the foundations of secular liberalism by dramatically demonstrating the need to build and maintain some kind of separation between religious and political concerns and structures. For some critics this claim that it was the chaos of the so-called Wars of Religion that led more or less directly to a ‘Great Separation’ (the need to separate ‘religion’ from ‘the state’ and to insist on the complete secularity of the latter) has been successfully challenged. Alternative accounts, which stress instead the instrumentalization of religion by the authorities of the emergent early modern states with their developing monopoly of the means of violence and their co-optation of churches as a means to bolster their claims, would now appear to carry more weight (Cavanaugh, 2009). The bearing of various rival claims on normative issues such as the myths and realities of religious violence or the relative secularity of the state continues to have particular relevance due to stubborn path-dependent differences in the development of alternative patterns of religion-state relations. The analysis of these patterns which continue to evince features inherited from a distant and not-so-distant past supports the arguments of those who stress the degree of complexity and mutual entanglement in religion-state relations. On the other hand, it also suggests a more nuanced ‘non-separationist’ view of the legitimacy of many of Europe’s varied arrangements in the governance of the field of religion by lending support to the joint theses that, *grosso modo*, an emergent European model of religion-state relations can be identified one furthermore that is broadly consistent with egalitarian liberal principles.

## ‘Caesar and God’: the ancestral heritage

David Martin once claimed that ‘Europe is a unity by virtue of having possessed one Caesar and one God i.e. by virtue of Rome. It is a diversity by virtue of the existence of nations’, adding that ‘the patterns of European religion’ derive in large part from the nature of the inherent tension of the partnership between Caesar and God on the one hand, and—especially in more recent times—from the relationship between religion and ‘the search for national integrity and identity’ on the other (Martin, 1978: 100). While this bold observation identifies some of the sources of unity and diversity in the patterning of religion–state relations in Europe, it cannot be taken to imply that such unity as was evinced at any time by ‘virtue of Rome’ has ever been anything but incomplete. Of course, the Roman Empire itself never extended to the whole of the continent and even when the spread of Christianity finally took it, formally at least, to supplant the last of the previously existing pagan traditions (in Lithuania in 1384), its hold on parts of Southern Europe had already been partially pegged back. In addition, the Christian tradition itself had by that time already developed a series of internal differences which were associated with contrasting institutional patterns across all four points of the compass (East and West, North and South), broadly corresponding to the continent’s cultural–linguistic differences—Slavic and Greek in the East, Latinate and Germanic in the West. In very general terms it can be said that Christianity suffered major schismatic division approximately every 500 years since its founding as a distinct religious tradition: firstly, around 500, when Oriental Orthodox Christians separated on grounds of their dissent from doctrinal positions fixed at the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451, and, secondly, when Eastern Orthodox Christians split from Latin Catholic Christians (and/or vice versa) over issues of church authority, a schism which is conventionally dated to 1054. In the ‘holy year’ of 1500 (declared by the scandalous Borgia Pope Alexander VI (1492–1503)) Catholic Western Europe did, in fact, still retain a degree of religious unity, having seemingly survived crises such as the Investiture Conflict (1076–1122) and the tumultuous times when as many as three rival popes (1378–1417) had vied for authority within the Church. Within two decades of 1500 however this unity was to be massively disrupted for the third, quinquennial time when the onset of the Reformation controversies precipitated a further ‘great schism’, broadly dividing Western Europe between a more or less solidly Protestant Reformation North and a Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation South. Ever since, the confessional map of Europe has been divided between three (Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, and Roman Catholic) historically mono-confessional blocs and two intervening multi-confessional belts, the borders of which have remained largely in place, in spite of other massive changes (Madeley, 2003a).

In the conventional periodization of European history 1500 falls squarely around the end of the late Middle Ages and the onset of early modernity. In addition to the opening-up of ‘new worlds’ beyond Europe itself, promoted by the developing maritime empires whose centres were to be found on the Atlantic seaboard, the date is also associated with another breakpoint signalling major change in both the religious and political fields. In broad terms, the Church had up until that time remained the compulsory institution it had first become 1,000 years earlier when Theodosius the Great (r. 379–95) had suppressed pagan rites across the whole Christian *ecumene* and his namesake successor had instituted a law code aimed at the suppression of heresy—a move to which St Augustine gave theological sanction shortly after. With the final dissolution of the Roman Empire in the West (conventionally dated to 476) and the establishment of ‘barbarian’ kingdoms across its former space the Church had struggled to maintain such unity as could be achieved by suppressing internal sources of division, while extending its geographical reach by a series of more or less forceful missionizing campaigns aimed at converting first pagan rulers and then the tribal societies over which they held sway. By the time of the East–West schism in 1054, the Christianization of Western and Central Europe was already well advanced; despite the temporary loss of most of the Iberian Peninsula to Islam, only the Nordic and Baltic regions remained to be absorbed into the *Res publica Christiana* of Catholic Christendom. With the colonization of rural areas, often under the leadership of monastic institutions, and the attendant revival of trade and the growth of towns, Latin Christian Europe



underwent a first cultural renaissance and developed into a civilizational unit loosely held together by the Roman Church. In this early period Christendom 'was not divided vertically into large and small independent states, each sovereign within its own borders. ... [Instead it] was horizontally stratified into four broad classes: the nobility, from kings to simple knights; the clergy; the townspeople, artisans and merchants; and the mass of the people who were mainly concerned with agriculture' (Watson, 1992: 139–40). As to the system of rule, this was shared between princely or imperial houses and their feudatories and the Church; from as early as 494 Pope Gelasius (492–6) had spoken of 'the two powers by which this world is chiefly ruled, the sacred authority of the clergy and the imperial power' but, as with any system of duopoly, the nature of the balance—or lack of it—was for centuries a major source of tension. There were complex webs of interdependence whereby, for example, 'the Church system of religious, educational, bureaucratic, and charitable life co-existed with the military and proprietary prerogatives of the nobility, [while] in fact the feudal administrative structure depended on Church personnel, and the Church was itself a landowner of immense wealth and political presence' (Bobbitt, 2002: 75). In spite of—or perhaps because of—this degree of mutual dependence, for much of the high Middle Ages a series of periodic conflicts came to characterize the relationship as

[t]he theocratic claims of the church and spiritual rulers to possess primacy over the temporal rulers and, thus, ultimate supremacy and the right to rule over temporal affairs as well, were met with the caesaropapist claims of kings to embody sacred sovereignty by divine right and by the attempts of temporal rulers to incorporate the spiritual sphere into their temporal patrimony and vassalage.

(Casanova, 1994: 14)

p. 255 Christianity had from its first beginnings as a separate religious tradition been exercised about its relations with the holders of political authority and/or physical force: over time it had had to negotiate its relations with Roman Emperors (both pagan and, after Constantine, Christian), Germanic kings and their feudal vassals, independent cities, principalities, republics, and federations—and even, in the case of the Iberian Peninsula, Sicily, and (from the fifteenth century) the Balkans—with Islamic sultans and caliphs. In Europe's Eastern Orthodox bloc a tradition of 'symphonic' cooperation between church and empire continued intact in those Eastern territories where secular authorities either remained or managed to re-establish themselves under Christian overlordship. In the Catholic West, on the other hand, dramatic contests between imperial, royal, and other rulers and the Church arose periodically over the relative precedence of religious and secular authority. The Gregorian Reform of the Church from the late eleventh century had attempted finally to impose the recognition of two leading principles: the superiority of the spiritual over the temporal power and the emancipation of the Church from lay control. The papal claim to *plenitudo potestatis*, was most forcefully expressed in the Decretals of Innocent III, whose pontificate (1198–1216) represented the height of the medieval papacy's power and authority. Around the same time however royal houses in Western Europe were successfully establishing powerful rivalrous kingdoms which found papal pretensions to overriding authority irksome and illegitimate, such that by around 1500 the balance in the contest for paramountcy swung finally in favour of the civic authorities of the emergent dynastic states.

## The early modern confessional state

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It is no coincidence that the neologism of the term 'state' became current at the same time as the Reformation and its associated struggles shattered what remained of the unity of Latin Christendom. As Adam Watson argued, while both the Italian Renaissance of the fifteenth century and the Reformation of the sixteenth contributed to the dislocation of 'the horizontal structure of medieval Christendom', it was the Reformation which 'complicated and distorted into unexpected shapes the new practices of statecraft associated with the Renaissance' (Watson, 1992: 169). However, while it wrought a seismic change in religion-state relations, the Reformation did not put an end to the principle that the civic authorities had responsibilities in the field of religion, in addition to their supposed duty of care for the security and material welfare of their subject populations. Indeed, on one view, in the countries of Northern Europe where it became institutionalized the Reformation can be seen as greatly extending the range of religious duties and concerns to embrace everyone. The striking image of the breaking down of monastery walls, symbolizing the removal of the barrier between the closed world of the religious orders of monks and nuns and the outside world, has been interpreted in starkly contrasting ways. For José Casanova it represented the destruction of the religious enclave and the triumph of the secular over the religious: 'If before, it was the religious realm which appeared to be the all-encompassing reality, within which the secular realm found its proper place, now the secular sphere [would] be the all-encompassing reality, to which the religious sphere [would] have to adapt' (Casanova, 1994: 15). An alternative interpretation sees the removal of the barrier between religious and secular spaces as releasing religious impulses from their previous confines, so allowing them to permeate the whole social order, with the idea of God-given vocations no longer applying solely to the performers of church-related functions—but also to princes and ploughmen, as well and as much as to prelates and priests. Whichever interpretation is favoured, the changes wrought were all the more weighty because they coincided with and contributed to (not least by the transfer of church property and wealth to the coffers of the temporal authorities), the emergence of the modern state in its earliest form. The motives behind the secularization of church property were doubtless only in rare cases, if at all, purely religious, even where it was undertaken with the aim of supporting the military defence of various Reformation settlements against imperial Habsburg attempts to suppress them. Since, as Tilly has remarked, wars make states almost as much as states make war, the diversion of former church resources during the so-called 'Wars of Religion' of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries further tilted the balance between religious and state institutions in favour of the latter. It was during this period that progressively independent princely states developed out of what had previously been mere realms, 'customary political structures with only a rudimentary administrative apparatus lacking a permanent bureaucracy, a diplomatic corps or an army of its own' (Bobbitt, 2002: 93 and *passim*). However, once created as a mere instrument of the prince, the state 'took on a life of its own and a succession of constitutional orders arose': as princely states became 'progressively discontinuous' through the practices of dynastic inheritance and marriage, new forms of royal or kingly states that were geographically more centralized and both militarily and administratively more powerful emerged (Bobbitt, 2002: 93).

Instead of marking the emergence of a distinctly secular new form of polity the early modern state took the form of a confessional institution committed to managing the affairs of whichever religious tradition was locally favoured by the holders of temporal authority. The birth of Europe's system of states, which is conventionally dated to the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, did require the signatories thenceforth to desist from attempts by diplomacy or war to change the religious adherence of target populations but this secularizing requirement targeted only the external relations between states. By contrast, in matters of the domestic arrangements of the contracting parties the Westphalian peace buttressed the prohibition against religious war by confirming the right of the state authorities of a given territory to maintain one of the three recognized confessions on the basis of the *cuius regio eius religio* rule (literally, 'whose realm, his religion'), inherited from the 1555 Treaty of Augsburg and now, finally, set in stone. While the Westphalian peace did

make provision for the protection of some defined religious minority groups of the three confessions, from 1648 onwards, recognition of the overriding authority of state authorities in matters of religion—over the protests of the papacy and the resistance of the more dissident religious minorities—led to a new and decisive phase in the consolidation of church settlements aimed at enforcing conformity to the locally established majority religions, penalizing or expelling those who refused to conform. This process of the progressive ‘confessionalization’ of populations continued for at least a century after 1648 across much of Europe and involved such notorious episodes as the 1685 Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, which ended a century’s toleration of France’s Huguenot minority, and in the 1720s the forcible expulsion of many thousands of Protestants from the archbishopric of Salzburg. These episodes were, however, only the most dramatic cases arising from the widespread deployment of systems of penal law which underwrote the religious monopoly of established churches under state management. As René Rémond points out, under the absolutist governments which ruled over most of the European Continent until the late eighteenth century, a so-called regalist tradition obtained virtually everywhere regardless of confessional differences: ‘It asserted the superiority of the secular power over the churches ... *Ancien régime* governments shared the conviction, then generally held, that society was unable to do without religion and that the state had authority and responsibilities in the matter’ (Rémond, 1999: 79–80).

## Religion–state relations under conditions of modernity

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State confessionalism did come under increasing liberal attack from the late seventeenth century when, for example, John Locke—on the basis of his more modern understanding of religion as a matter of inward belief—argued that the magistrate ought to have or claim no jurisdiction over citizens' religious affairs, which should instead be left entirely to the individual alone with his conscience. Despite vigorous support for this position by many Enlightenment *philosophes* in the following century and various liberalizing reforms introduced by some of the so-called Enlightened Despots of Prussia, Austria, and Russia, it was only with the outbreak of the French Revolution of 1789 that there occurred 'the first breach in the old order founded on the principle of state religion' (Rémond, 1999: 38). It was in the spirit of John Locke (1632–1704) that the 1789 *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* declared in Article X: 'No one may be harassed because of his opinions, even religious ones' and the rights of national citizenship were to be conferred without regard to religious belonging. While these free exercise rights were introduced however remnants of the tradition of religious establishment survived in France, and throughout the nineteenth century a variety of forms of establishment succeeded each other. The Roman Catholic Church was at least partially restored under the terms of an 1802 Concordat and associated Organic Articles whereby Catholicism was formally recognized not as a state religion but as the religion of the great majority of the French nation. Alongside it, meanwhile, French Protestants and Jews both received official recognition and state support. In this respect France certainly led the way for other European countries so that by 1900, along with the progressive de-linking of citizenship from church membership, the growth of religious pluralism, and liberalizing reforms of penal laws against religious dissidence, the largest churches almost everywhere continued to benefit from advantageous arrangements with the state authorities. This was most especially the case in the three mono-confessional blocs which occupied the Lutheran Northern, Roman Catholic Southern, and Orthodox Eastern parts of Europe, each with their own preferred traditions of religious establishment. Even in Italy, where after 1870 the Vatican refused to accept the loss of its Papal Territories or to recognize the legitimacy of the then newly united Kingdom of Italy, the Catholic Church's overwhelmingly dominant position as the well-endowed religion of the vast majority of Italian citizens persisted. By contrast, in the multi-confessional belt which spanned almost unbroken from Ireland to Transylvania, patterns of religion–state relations were more varied and complex because of the coexistence within the individual territories of substantial religious minorities. Even there, however, the predominant pattern of religion–state relations was one of the establishment of the numerically dominant confession area by area, twinned with either de jure or de facto patterns of toleration of the principal religious minorities (Madeley, 2009b).

Partly on account of the varying majority–minority imbalances and of contrasting confessional affiliations the actual forms of establishment have throughout varied a great deal not least as indicated by such alternative descriptions as universal, state, national, or 'folk' churches. In the United Kingdom the Anglican Church for long retained (and, in the case of England, retains) formal establishment status in England and Wales, while a series of reforming measures progressively reduced the exclusive privileges and advantages attaching to that status. At the same time the Presbyterian Church remained the officially recognized national church in Scotland, while in Ireland (then a part of the United Kingdom) the Roman Catholic Church was in receipt of some state support from the 1840s and in 1869 the Anglican Church was formally disestablished. Other systems of multiple establishment and partial disestablishment could be found at or below national state level in the other multi-confessional territories of the continent—in Switzerland with its large number of cantonal divisions, for example. Finland, which stood at the northern end of the second multi-confessional belt running north–south along the border between Eastern Orthodoxy and the other confessions, a unique system of dual establishment—Lutheran and Orthodox state churches alongside each other over the same undivided territory—existed. In those parts of Europe where the Enlightenment had impacted either through the action of the so-called Enlightened Despots or through the later, and more

forceful, intervention of the French revolutionary armies, systems of religious establishment made a largely successful return after 1815. In the case of Austria, for example, an 1855 Concordat with the Vatican reversed the policy which had been inaugurated in the previous century by removing Catholic education from state control, returning it to the exclusive jurisdiction of the bishops. In Eastern Europe, the trend around 1900 was also towards reinforcing the principle of religious establishment under state auspices; in the Russian Empire, for example, Russian Orthodoxy was once again ruthlessly promoted even in the multi-confessional territories where Lutheranism (in the northern Baltics) and Catholicism (in the Russian-governed part of Poland) had previously enjoyed relatively generous measures of toleration. Overall, according to the *World Christian Encyclopedia* (WCE) the evidence shows that in 1900 all but one (the Netherlands) of Europe's forty-six territories were occupied by states which could still be adjudged de jure 'religious', that is, officially committed in one way or another to the support of either a particular religion or religions (thirty-one cases) or to religion in general (fourteen cases) (Barrett, Kurian, and Johnson, 1982; Madeley 2009b: 180).

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The foundations of these systems of religious establishment and privilege inherited from the age of state confessionalism came under severe threat after 1900 as the historically dominant churches ceased to be able to rely on the systems of penal law which had once buttressed their status. In France, where tensions between clericals and anti-clericals had run especially high in the 1890s, a 1905 Law of Separation proclaimed that thenceforth the Republic would neither recognize nor subsidize any religious confession or cult whatsoever, thereby finally setting in place the country's distinctive commitment to *laïcité*. In Britain at around the same time Nonconformist agitation for Anglican disestablishment in Wales was rising on the back of a dispute about the funding of religious education and in 1914 the decisive vote was taken to disestablish (a decision which finally came into effect in 1920). If the principle of formal church establishment was already being pegged back here and there in parts of Western Europe before 1914 however, the First World War and its outcome acted as a major 'extinction event' especially in Eastern Europe where the great land empires of the Hohenzollerns, Habsburgs, and Romanovs were broken up. In Russia the Orthodox Church was disestablished three months after the Bolsheviks had seized power in late 1917, thereby reducing it to the status of a mere association with no corporate legal personality and so depriving it of the ownership of its large patrimony of church buildings. In Georgia and Armenia, the Orthodox churches were also disestablished after the brief experiment with independence from the Soviet Union. The end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918 also spelled the end of formal church establishment in Austria, Hungary, and the territories which became part of 'Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes' (from 1921 Yugoslavia). Similarly, in Germany the Weimar Constitution of 1919 formally disestablished the state church while allowing for cooperation in matters of religious education in the public schools, the raising of the *Kirchensteuer* church tax and various official chaplaincies. Meanwhile, in the south-eastern corner of Europe after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire the Kemalist regime not only abolished the caliphate in 1923 and but also launched a radical campaign of state-enforced secularization which prohibited the use of conspicuous religious dress in public, abolished the *tariqat* foundations and subjected all religious bodies to close state control under a Ministry of Religious Affairs.

Many contemporary commentators concluded that, taken together, these developments indicated that church establishment had finally been consigned to the dustbin of history. Its survival in different confessional guises in England, the Nordic countries, and the Iberian Peninsula were seen as anomalous and likely soon to suffer the same dismal fate as elsewhere. In Catholic thinking state churches—despite their virtual existence in the overwhelmingly Catholic small states of Liechtenstein, Malta, and Monaco—had never been fully legitimate institutional forms, having typically come into existence on the back of idiosyncratic entanglements with the local temporal authorities. The arrangement officially preferred by the Vatican was, instead, friendly cooperation between church and state on the basis of Concordats, that is, treaties negotiated to protect the autonomy of the church and to provide favourable conditions for its mission in civil society. It was on this basis that relations between the Vatican and the Italian state were,

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after sixty years, finally settled by the 1929 Lateran Pacts which incidentally also finally regularized the existence of Europe's only remaining church-state: the State of Vatican City. Four years later concordat agreements were also signed with Germany and Austria. In Spain, where the Latin pattern of massive clerical-anticlerical confrontation was starkly exemplified in a series of violent political oscillations, 1931 saw the separation of church and state, the nationalization of church property, the secularization of the education system, and the expulsion of the Jesuits. By the end of the decade however, after three years of civil war, Franco's authoritarian regime had reversed the situation once again and firmly entrenched a distinctly reactionary system of National Catholicism.

Following the 1945 end of the Second World War, religion-state relations were again affected as a wave of democratization swept Western Europe propelled by complete disenchantment with the authoritarian and totalitarian alternatives of fascism, Nazism, and communism. Christian Democratic parties were among the primary beneficiaries of this development and it was largely under governments dominated by them in Western Europe that the principal religious institutions were restored to their former relatively privileged status alongside wider measures of post-war reconstruction. In Germany and Italy, the inter-war concordats remained in force, while in Spain, a new concordat in 1953 further reinforced for a time Franco's system of National Catholicism until that was replaced by a new series of concordats during the later wave of democratization of the late 1970s. In Eastern Europe, 1945 initially saw radically different outcomes as Soviet-installed regimes imposed strict controls on religious bodies—thus, in Poland, for example, the Communist government abrogated the existing concordat within a few months of being installed. By 1970 all twenty-two countries of Eastern Europe's Soviet-dominated bloc could be designated by the WCE as '*de jure* Atheistic', that is, committed to 'formally promoting irreligion'. Typically, this meant that while the state was ostensibly separated from all religious bodies, it was also 'linked for ideological reasons with irreligion and opposed on principle to all religion', a stand promoted by acts of 'discrimination, obstruction or even suppression' (Barrett, Kurian, and Johnson, 1982: 96). Ostensible 'separation' in these states meant the exclusion of religion from public life and limitations on the resources required for religion to flourish freely; it emphatically did not mean a liberal 'twin toleration' or 'two-way protection' debarring state authorities from interfering in religious matters—rather, as in Turkey, the state typically exerted maximum control, or even (as in the extreme case of Albania from 1967 to 1991) attempting to abolish religion altogether. This generally hostile posture of the state authorities in most of Eastern Europe survived until the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union shortly after which all the states coded by the WCE as Atheistic in 1970 had ↴ soon either returned to the '*de jure* Religious' category, providing support to the locally dominant religious tradition (fifteen cases), or had opted to be '*de jure* Secular' (seven cases: Russia, the three Baltic States, Hungary, Slovakia and Macedonia), that is, officially promoting neither religion nor irreligion (Barrett, Kurian, and Johnson, 1982). In all of the '*de jure* Secular' cases however, religious institutions received some measure of restitution of buildings and property which enabled them *de facto* to re-establish something of their historic standing and public presence (Madeley, 2003: 15–17). This reversion of the former Soviet bloc countries to patterns of relative religious privilege for their historically dominant confessions twinned with measures of religious toleration for other recognized religious traditions can be seen as signalling a measure of convergence towards common principles of religion-state relations applicable across the whole of Europe. Remarkably, however, comparing the end of the twentieth century with its beginning reveals that there had, at least according to the WCE's codings, occurred no net change in the number of states which declared *de jure* some positive, pro-religious orientation.

# Contemporary patterns: an emergent European model?

In surveys of religion-state relations in Europe it was for a long time conventional to distinguish between three broad types of ecclesiastical law system: official church establishment, strict separationist, and concordat-based (Robbers, 2005). In 1999 Silvio Ferrari argued, however, that this basic typology had become outmoded because it relied too much on the formal elements of institutional relationships. His principal objection was that the tripartite distinction obscured the existence at the level of ‘legal substance’ of what he claimed was a common European ‘model of religious modernity’ deeply rooted in Western Europe’s political and legal culture—one which might furthermore prove sufficiently robust to serve as a model for changing religion-state relations in Eastern Europe. In its developed form Ferrari’s model was characterized by four elements. The first was a commitment to making a reality of the liberal principles of freedom of conscience, religion, and belief, as established by various international instruments such as the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights. The second (and most distinctive) element was what he identified as a systematic privileging of the position of recognized religious bodies in a sort of ‘protected area’ within the public sphere. The third and fourth elements concerned the role of the state as referee of disputes occurring within the said ‘protected area’ and ‘the selected and graded cooperation of public institutions with religious communities’ (Ferrari, 2008: 110).

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Ferrari’s contention was not entirely novel, although coming from a canon lawyer it was unusual: other authors have over time observed or implied the distinctiveness of European patterns of religion-state relations. Among American legal scholars it had long been assumed that in the fifty-odd states which currently constitute Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals, there was not a single one whose arrangements could match up to the strict separationist standards of the American Constitution, as these had prevailed in the jurisprudence of its Supreme Court from 1947 to the 1980s. Also, in the 1990s America’s ‘supply-side’ sociologists of religion purported to explain the contrast between organized religion’s relative vitality in America and debility in Europe in terms of the contrast between open, free, and fair ‘religious market’ conditions in the former and sets of artificial restrictions on market access plus governmental interference in the latter. From the field of comparative politics Alfred Stepan similarly observed that in Europe any supposed ‘separation of church and state’, which was so often assumed to be an essential feature of liberal democracy, was typically either absent or radically incomplete (Stepan, 2000). And around the same time, René Rémond concluded that while many detailed differences in patterns of religion-state relations subsisted, they were ‘less pronounced than is thought’ and were tending to diminish, leading to the conclusion ‘that today there is a way, both common to all European peoples and original as regards the rest of the world, of regulating religion-society relations’ (Rémond, 1999: 215–17).

As Table 14.1 shows, using data from Jonathan Fox’s study of the relative degrees of—or deviations from—religion-state separation as of 2002, no European state matched the USA’s record on SRAS (Separation of Religion and State) although the Netherlands and Estonia came close (Fox, 2008, 2015; Madeley 2009a). The mean score of deviations from full SRAS for all twenty-three Western European countries was 19.17 where each whole point represented an instance of deviation from strict separationism. The Eastern European mean score of 24.24 was somewhat higher, evidently as a result of the overall higher scores of the historically Orthodox countries. On the whole however, and with the possible exception of these latter, the picture is one of a broadly similar pattern across the whole continent characterized by a normal distribution of deviations from American-style separationism, particularly when contrasted with the score profiles of other world regions (Madeley, 2009b: 187–8).

As Table 14.1 also illustrates, significant variations do continue to subsist although not as and where they might be expected: for example, the ostensibly Separationist regimes identified in France and Azerbaijan scored higher than the Western and Eastern respective means. The lowest-scoring states were those coded Accommodationist, a term which was taken to indicate not simple neutrality so much as ‘benevolent’

(non-)neutrality towards religion of the sort approved by some American commentators on European religion-state relations (Monsma and Soper, 1997). Interestingly, the more positively pro-religious Cooperationist pattern, for which Germany provides a prime exemplar, is found to be now well-represented on both sides of the former Iron Curtain—in the West accounting for eight (out of twenty-three) cases while in the East fully nine (out of twenty-two) were coded thus. One East–West difference appears striking however: only one Eastern country, Armenia, with the highest deviation from SRAS in the whole of Europe, was judged to have instituted an Official Religion regime, while in Western Europe there were fully ten cases. This contrast, which reflects an ‘antidisestablishmentarian’ conservative pattern in parts of Western Europe on the one hand and the post-1990 trend to restore the place of religion in the East on the other, is modified by the fact that nine of the latter are classified as Endorsed Religion regimes.



**Table 14.1.** State–religion regime types in Europe

	Western Democracies	SRAS Score	State–Religious Regime Type	Former Soviet Bloc	SRAS Score	State–Religious Regime Type
0.00 >9.99	Netherlands	1.25	Accommodationist	Estonia	3.52	Accommodationist
				Albania	7.69	Accommodationist
10.00>19.99	Luxembourg	10.50	Cooperationist	Slovenia	11.96	Cooperationist
	Sweden	12.17	Cooperationist	Bosnia-H	16.33	Cooperationist
	Italy	13.00	Endorsed Religion	Yugoslavia	16.75	Cooperationist
	Ireland	15.75	Cooperationist	Latvia	17.56	Cooperationist
	Gk Cyprus	16.13	Cooperationist	Lithuania	17.58	Cooperationist
	Tk. Cyprus	16.96	Endorsed Religion	Czech Rep	18.19	Cooperationist
	Germany	19.88	Cooperationist	Slovakia	19.88	Cooperationist
				Ukraine	19.99	Cooperationist
20.00>29.99	Switzerland	20.50	Cooperationist	Poland	22.21	Endorsed Religion
	Portugal	21.94	Endorsed Religion	Croatia	22.42	Endorsed Religion
	France	22.92	Separationist	Hungary	22.79	Cooperationist
	Andorra	23.13	Official Religion	Romania	24.50	Endorsed Religion
	Austria	24.25	Cooperationist	Macedonia	27.17	Endorsed Religion
	Belgium	25.50	Official Religion			
	Malta	25.63	Official Religion			
	Norway	25.83	Official Religion			
	Denmark	26.04	Official Religion			
	Liechtenstein	27.50	Official Religion			

	UK	27.67	Official Religion(s)			
	Spain	28.46	Official Religion			
	Iceland	29.79	Official Religion			
30.00>39.99	Finland	32.88	Official Religion(s)	Russia	30.48	Endorsed Religion
	Greece	33.31	Official Religion	Azerbaijan	31.65	Separationist
				Moldova	32.34	Endorsed Religion
				Georgia	32.83	Endorsed Religion
				Belarus	35.66	Endorsed Religion
				Bulgaria	36.72	Endorsed Religion
40.00>49.99				Armenia	40.36	Official Religion
Mean Scores		19.17			24.24	

Source: Fox’s measures of deviation from strict Separation of Religion and State (SRAS); table adapted from Fox, 2008, 2015; Madeley 2009a.

Ferrari’s claim for the existence of a virtual common European model remains controversial and contested. In 2007 Veit Bader concluded on the basis of his detailed taxonomy of different patterns of the ‘governance of religious diversity’ that there was ‘no ↴

↴ convergence—not in the EU and emphatically not globally’ (Bader, 2007: 61). For him the detailed differences in patterns of religious governance (taking account of, inter alia, types of governmental regime, the legal statuses of organized religions, and the relative degrees of autonomy of churches and religious communities) were, when compared across different branches (legislative, judicative, executive) and different levels (central/federal, regional, and local) of states, too many and varied to yield any sense of trending commonality. While at this level of detail Bader’s points appear well founded it can be argued, nonetheless, that from a broader comparative perspective, such as that which informs Ferrari’s claim as supported by Fox’s ground-breaking work, it is the ostensible commonality of European patterns, not their particularities, which stands out as, for example, dissident religious groups such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses doggedly establish their rights to recognition and free practice across most of Europe. At the supranational level the action of the European Court of Human Rights—despite the many criticisms to which its use of the doctrine of margins of appreciation has been subjected—is seen by some to have augmented this trending towards a legal isomorphism (McCrea, 2010; Ringelheim, 2017). And it is in this comparative context that legal scholar Norman Doe argues that ‘[w]hile there are real and significant differences of detail, the

similarities between national laws [as between ‘the States of Europe’] are also profound’ and that from among them ‘shared similarities of religion law’ can be identified (Doe, 2011: 2).

## Conclusion

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The question of the relative secularity of the state in Europe—or, differently put, of the degree to which European states typically treat religion unequally relative to non-religious value systems—is no mere academic issue. For Christian Joppke the term secular state is a pleonasm, a redundant expression, since the state as it developed in Europe 500 years ago is secular by definition as a political order where ‘religion and politics are separate, in the sense that religion does not control the political process and prejudice membership’. The notion of a religious state, by contrast, represents for him an inherently contradictory amalgam of a secularist term (state) and ‘a reality that denies its very premises and thus cannot but distort it’ (Joppke, 2015: 5–6). Regardless of the definitional issue Joppke is surely right to regard the secular state thus understood as ‘under siege’ as much in Europe as it is in America, even though the nature of the challenges faced differ greatly. In Europe it is Islam that has raised the principal challenge, originating as it does from a different civilizational context and operating on principles different from those of Christianity. Alternatively, however, the awkward issues associated with its growing presence in Europe among relatively recent immigrant groups would appear to arise in part from the understandable demand that it should receive the same level of special consideration that the major Christian churches and organizations have historically enjoyed. The difficulties associated with these issues have only been made more intractable with the eruption since 9/11 of a species of Islamic extremism which ‘securitized’ some related issues in addition to encouraging waves of Islamophobia among right-wing populists.

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Among Anglophone political philosophers debates about religion in the public sphere have in recent decades tended to revolve around two poles: first, about whether or not religious reasons and arguments should be excluded from public debate and ruled out of consideration in policy-making, and second, about institutional issues concerning the complex relationship between states and organized religions and how these should be evaluated. On the first issue both Rawls and Habermas modified their early exclusionary positions and moved to accept that ‘the burden of translation’ of religious reasons and arguments into forms of secular public reason accessible to all would discriminate unfairly against religious actors. In this they might be seen as replicating the general trend of secular-religious convergence which Ferrari and others have pointed to. On the second, more institutional issue, however, the privileging of religious over non-religious bodies in public space à la Ferrari’s European model would appear to offend against the requirements of egalitarian liberalism—even making for an equal and opposite inequality of treatment which affords unfair advantages and benefits to religious actors. In some jurisdictions this offence can be seen as aggravated by the effective construction of ‘hierarchies of recognition’ between officially favoured religions, recognized religions, tolerated religions, and even—several gradations down—those sectarian others (in particular so-called cults) which are denied any recognition as religious at all.

Cécile Laborde has argued however that weak forms of establishment present few threats to the principles of a minimal secularism, which alone are necessary to safeguard egalitarian liberal values (Laborde, 2017: 116–17). According to her analysis one of the reasons for the disputation over the assumed necessity of separationism, especially among liberals, arises from a tendency to (mis-)understand religion as merely representing one type of conception of the good which, as such, should rightfully claim no priority over any other. Basing her analysis on what she calls an interpretive understanding, she makes the case that religion’s essential multidimensionality needs to be recognized, insofar as it represents much more than Lockean propositions of inward belief, or even codes of moral and ethical conduct, since typically it also constitutes comprehensive ways of life with implications for political theories of justice, modes of voluntary association, and associated—and vulnerable—collective identities. As such religion can rightfully be judged

worthy of protection by the state within the limits appropriately prescribed for the protection of the rights of all—including, not least, the members of religious groups themselves.

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## The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Europe

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### CHAPTER

## 15 Religion, Secularity, and Secularization in Europe

Grace Davie

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### Abstract

The first section of this chapter covers the conceptual understandings of secular, secularization, secularity and secularism, together with the rich sources of data available in Europe. It argues that secularization is neither linear nor predictable; it is a complex and contingent process that takes place differently in different places both within Europe and beyond. The second section recalls the long-term evolution of the secular in Europe as a whole. The core of the chapter, however, focuses on the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This period is considered both chronologically and thematically with the following question in mind: is Europe secular because it is modern, or is Europe secular because it is European? Given the growing conviction that Europe is unusually secular in global terms, it seems that the latter is more likely. Secularization is central to the self-understanding of modern Europe; it should not be assumed, however, that secularization is a necessary—thus universal—concomitant of modernization.

**Keywords:** Europe, modernization, religion, secular, secularization, secularity, secularism, data

**Subject:** History of Religion, Religion

**Series:** Oxford Handbooks

THIS chapter finds its focus in the notion of secularization, its meaning (or more accurately meanings), the evidence for and against its occurrence, and its relationship to both the evolution and idea of Europe. This relationship is best captured in a question: is Europe secular because it is modern, or is Europe secular because it is European?

The core of the chapter is structured as follows. It looks first at definitions and data: underlining the need for care in articulating the key terms (secular, secularization, secularity, and secularism), and identifying the multiplicity of sources that can be used as evidence in the debate. It then turns to the vexed questions of origins, timing, and trajectories: why, when, and where did the process known as secularization occur and against what benchmark(s) is it to be measured? A persistent theme emerges from these discussions: secularization is not one thing—it is a complex and contingent process that takes place differently in different places both within Europe and beyond. The third and fourth sections focus on the post-war period from two points of view. The third section uses a chronological approach and outlines four rather different



post-war generations. The fourth is thematic and examines trends and counter trends from 1945 onwards, recognizing that not all the relevant factors move in the same direction. Some point to greater secularity; others resist this trend. Two further questions arise from this discussion: the contested idea of the post-secular and the understanding of Europe as an exceptional case. The former reflects the contradictory nature of the current data; the latter returns to the broader relationship between modernization and secularization and the place of Europe in this debate. A short conclusion draws the threads together.

The placing of this chapter in the *Handbook* as a whole is significant. On the one hand it concludes a series of chapters on the links between religion, ideologies, and modernity; on the other it establishes the context for the material that follows, asking to what extent and in what ways modern Europe has, or has not, become secular. The narrative is necessarily long-term, but the emphasis lies on the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

## Definitions and data

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The terminology surrounding this debate is both complex and confusing. The term ‘secular’ is normally used as an adjective to describe a condition or situation; its meaning however is not only imprecise but slips easily from the descriptive to the normative. The notion of a secular state, for example, can be used in either sense: to describe what exists or to promote what is desired. ‘Secularization’ is quite different: it is a process, which—as already indicated—takes place differently in different societies and encompasses a multiplicity of factors not all of which move in the same direction. Societies that demonstrate a marked decline in religious activity over a given period of time may or may not be associated with secular institutions and vice versa. ‘Secularity’ is less frequently used in popular parlance but denotes a state of affairs that is described as secular, and is, by and large, a neutral term. ‘Secularism’ in contrast is an ideology and implies a commitment—to the process of secularization, for instance, or to the affirmation of the secular in this or that sphere of society, not least the state.

That at least is the theory. In practice it is more complicated. ‘Secularism’, for example, can be used in different ways: one radical and ideological and the other moderate or accommodative (Modood, 2011). The first insists on an absolute separation between state and religion, the second is more flexible. Broadly speaking, France exemplifies the former and Britain the latter, a difference that can be explained historically. A second set of issues reflects the ways in which a variety of terms are understood by the wider public—those, for example, who respond to opinion polls. A good example can be found in the constituency which checks the box ‘Christian’ when asked if they have a religion. Does this mean ‘Christian’ as opposed to ‘secular’, or ‘Christian’ as opposed to ‘Muslim’? Timing is important in this respect: the likelihood of the second option has increased in recent decades, especially in those parts of Europe which house a substantial Muslim population, meaning that the accuracy of longitudinal comparisons cannot simply be assumed.

More general questions of timing will be considered in the following section. Before engaging these directly, it is important to establish the many and varied sources of data relating to religion—and thus to secularization—across Europe. These are both qualitative and quantitative. The former includes historical accounts, rich and very varied descriptions (both past and present), personal and public narratives (both oral and written), multitudes of case studies (both micro and macro), and painstaking comparisons. The latter are equally diverse and evolve over time, becoming ever more sophisticated as technical skills develop. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, a whole series of cross-cultural surveys have established themselves yielding extensive and growing data sets. Among these are the regularly published *Eurobarometers*,<sup>1</sup> and the outputs of the European Values Survey,<sup>2</sup> and the International Social Survey Programme.<sup>3</sup> Also important are the more focused studies of the Pew Research Center.<sup>4</sup> All of these deploy methodologically sophisticated databases which permit complex analyses across many different variables.

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Accurate interpretation of these findings depends however on careful contextualization, paying particular attention to historical detail.

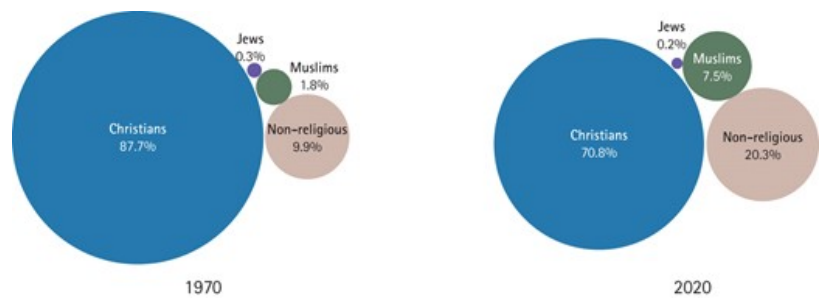
In short rounded accounts of secularization require a multiplicity of methods. It is not a case of either quantitative or qualitative data being superior, or even preferable. Both can be good or less good in terms of quality. The goal is to bring together the best of each in order not only to establish trends and countertrends, but to explain why they are happening.

Keeping this in mind, two rather different stories emerge across Europe as a whole, captured in Figures 15.1 and 15.2.<sup>5</sup> Each figure covers a different part of Europe: on the one hand Southern, Western, and Northern Europe (Figure 15.1), and on the other Eastern Europe, including Russia (Figure 15.2). The timespan is the same in each case (1970 to 2020) and includes the period both before and after 1989. In Southern, Western, and Northern Europe the trend is clear: this is a part of the world that by and large has become less Christian, more secular, and more religiously diverse as the decades pass. Conversely in Russia and Eastern Europe, Christian affiliation has increased—a trend that has favoured the historically dominant Orthodox churches rather than minorities. These contrasts underpin the more detailed discussions that follow, both in this chapter and in later Parts of the book. Neither trajectory indicates a single, simple, or in any way inevitable pathway to secularization and neither is monolithic. The line between them is somewhat arbitrary, and variations within the different regions are as important as the contrasts between them.

## Origins, timing, and trajectories

Timing has always been important in the debates surrounding secularization in Europe. Unsurprisingly in that a central element in the discussion interrogates the reasons for ↵ secularization: asking not only what these were, but why and when they happened? Opinions differ, notably with respect to dates.

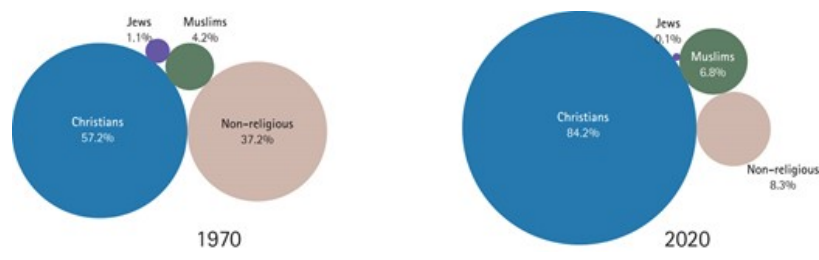
Figure 15.1



Religious affiliation in Southern, Western, and Northern Europe, 1970 and 2020. Historically Europe (thirty-nine countries) has been the most Christian continent in the world. However, the region experienced a sharp decline in its Christian affiliation between 1970 and 2020, resulting in a rise in non-religious identification (atheist and/or agnostic). That said, large numbers of Europeans still identify with their churches despite the fact that they neither believe nor practise their religion. There has also been a significant growth in the Muslim population due to immigration. The Jewish population continues to decline.

Data source: Todd M. Johnson and Brian J. Grim (eds.), *World Religion Database*, Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, accessed May 2020.

Figure 15.2



Religious affiliation in Eastern Europe, 1970 and 2020. Patterns of religious affiliation in Eastern Europe (Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, Ukraine) differ markedly from the rest of the continent. The year 1970 marked the height of identification as non-religious, as large sections of Eastern Europe were then dominated by state-imposed atheism. In the early 1990s, non-religion began a gradual decline as Christianity, primarily Orthodoxy, grew, offsetting secularizing trends in other parts of the continent. Judaism has also declined partly as a result of anti-Semitism.

Data source: Todd M. Johnson and Brian J. Grim (eds.), *World Religion Database*, Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, accessed May 2020.

p. 272 The story, moreover is a long one. James O’Connell (1991), for example, identifies three formative factors or narratives that come together in the creation and re-creation of the unity known as Europe: these are Judaeo-Christian monotheism, Greek rationalism, and Roman organization. These factors shift and evolve over time, but their combinations can be seen forming and re-forming a way of life that we have come to recognize as European. The religious strand within such combinations is self-evident, but so also is the secular. Both ebb and flow over the long term as the balance of religious and secular power shifts. How and when this happens depends on what part of Europe is under review. Western Europe, for instance, has experienced the Renaissance, the Reformation, the scientific revolution, the Enlightenment, and Romanticism and at each step the religious and the secular realigned—sometimes radically, sometimes less so. Further east, the countries of Europe have been through an equally formative, but different historical evolution, resulting in a rather different relationship between the religious and the secular which still pertains.

A key moment in Western Europe can be found in the philosophical and political upheavals that took place at the end of eighteenth century symbolized by the French Revolution (1789) and the chain of events that this unleashed both in France and, in the fullness of time, across much of Europe. The emergence of an independent and secular state was part and parcel of this shift, but exactly how this happened and what kind of state emerged varied considerably. The often-violent oscillations of French politics through the nineteenth century—from monarchy to republicanism and back again—are but one example. They are illustrative of the stand-off between a hegemonic and heavily clerical Catholic Church that had resisted reform from within at the time of the Reformation, and an equally implacable secular state that eventually triumphed, some hundred years later. The residues can still be felt. Very different were the evolutions that took place in Northern Europe, between a variety of Protestant churches declericalized from the inside at the time of the Reformation, and a state which saw these institutions as partners rather than rivals. Different again was the situation in the Orthodox countries in Eastern Europe, where independent states emerged from the Ottoman Empire closely aligned with nationally minded, autocephalous Orthodox churches.

To an extent all of these shifts were associated with the economic and social dislocations that took place as European societies industrialized and urbanized. Pre-modern, agricultural, and primarily rural societies became modern, industrial, urban—and (it was assumed) secular—at the same time. Once again, the process happened at different speeds and in different ways across the continent, encouraged or arrested by particular circumstances or specific events. Before examining these relationships in more detail, an additional factor is worth noting: the impact of these upheavals prompted new ways of thinking about

human living. Indeed, it is in these debates that the disciplines of social science find their roots. A full account of this process cannot be engaged in this chapter, but a key point stands out: that European social science was—and in many ways still is—a profoundly secular enterprise that places the autonomous individual in the centre of the frame, a stance with wide-ranging implications for the study of religion.

p. 273 The economic, political, and social sciences developed exponentially in the second half of the twentieth century, as European societies rebuilt themselves after the Second World War. Paradoxically, it was in this self-consciously secular milieu that David Martin (1978) developed his pioneering analyses, which identified not only the evidence for and against secularization both within Europe and beyond, but the crucial ‘events’ that determined the trajectories that emerge. These are: the success or failure of the Reformation, and the occurrence and timing of a revolution—be this English, American, French, or Russian. The absence of a revolution in most of Lutheran Europe is equally formative (Martin, 1978: 4–5). The distinctive patterns (or modes of secularization) that result from these pressures are identified as follows: the American; the British; the French (or Latin); the South American (extended Latin); the Russian; the Calvinist; and the Lutheran. In four decades of subsequent scholarship, Martin has both refined and developed these models extending the range of his examples both geographically and thematically in his discussions of secularization. Not everyone agrees with his conclusions, but no-one can ignore his work. It sets the parameters of the debate both in Europe and the wider world in the sense that secularization can no longer be seen as the automatic or inevitable outcome of modernization; nor is it a smooth or linear process. Christian history consists rather of what Martin calls ‘religious thrusts’ and ‘secular recoils’ that have existed for centuries rather than decades and merit close, careful, and case-by-case scrutiny (Martin, 2011: 6–7).

Timing, it follows, is crucial: where or when does the secularization process begin? Put differently, where or what are the high points of ‘religion’ in European history and which, if any, of these should these be taken as the benchmark for comparison? Are these to be found in the medieval Catholic Church which encompassed almost every area of society, or are they associated with the markedly high levels of religious affiliation and attendance found towards the end of the nineteenth century (Blaschke, 2002). The answer will depend as much on the understanding of secularization as on the evidence as such.

Broadly speaking, two schools of thought have emerged as scholars grapple with these issues, which can be classified as ‘strong’ and ‘less strong’ versions of the theory. The former sets out the expected (indeed inevitable) connections between modernization and secularization; the latter introduces a greater degree of nuance, understanding secularization as a necessarily contingent process. In the English-speaking literature, the former position is most clearly articulated by Bryan Wilson (1969, 1976, 1982), Steve Bruce (1996, 2002), and the early work of Peter Berger (1967). The latter is epitomized by David Martin (1978, 2005, 2011), Grace Davie (1994, 2015), José Casanova (1994), and the later Berger (1999).<sup>6</sup> Casanova’s much-quoted analysis underlines the complexity of these questions arguing that little progress can be made until the multiple threads within secularization are disentangled: secularization as differentiation must be separated out from secularization as decline, and from secularization as marginalization (1994: 211). Charles Taylor’s monumental *A Secular Age* adds a further layer, understanding the onset of the secular as a shift ‘from a society in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility among others’ (Taylor, 2007: 3).

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Keeping this complexity in mind, the remainder of this chapter will focus on the changes taking place in Europe since 1945. In the following section four post-war generations are introduced; in the next a variety of factors are set out, not all of which move in the same direction.

## Four post-war generations

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Much has changed in the decades following the Second World War. The ‘generations’ depicted in this section are not envisaged as strictly defined time periods; they are rather indicative of continuing, but from time to time very sharp, changes in mood with respect to religion, both across Europe and in different parts of the continent. The first invokes post-war reconstruction and the Cold War (1945–60); the second the radical changes of the 1960s and their aftermath; the third introduces the unexpected realignments beginning in 1979; and the fourth looks at the years before and after the new millennium.

In 1945, much of Europe lay in ruins. The damage, moreover, included huge numbers of churches, some of which were iconic—Coventry Cathedral in Britain, for example, or the Frauenkirche in Dresden. Many more were simply neighbourhood churches destroyed along with the communities of which they were part. Reconstruction, it followed, was the order of the day in an attempt to put back what was lost. Central to this endeavour in Western Europe were Europe’s historic churches, which remained ‘state’ churches, in the sense that they were territorially patterned at national (state), regional (diocesan), and local (parish) level.

A very different picture emerged in the countries that found themselves under Soviet domination, where the pervasive ideology was secularism, at times aggressive. Public displays of religiousness were considered a threat to the regime and were rigorously suppressed, though more brutally in some cases than others. Common to all of these cases, however, is a crucial point. In this part of Europe, the collusions of religious and political power that characterized much of West Europe were necessarily subverted. No longer were the dominant churches in the East counting on the state for favours; they were, rather, victims of a state-enforced secular ideology. Of course, some churches and some individuals were compromised, but in many cases, religious institutions became the natural carriers of an alternative ideology—providing space for gathering and for increasingly public debate (Martin, 1996).

If, in the 1950s, the mood of the churches in the West was by and large one of reconstruction, the following decade was very different. Not everything happened at once, but by the end of the 1960s a profound transformation in political, social and, above all, sexual attitudes had taken place in a series of changes that affected almost every sector of society. The ‘events’ in Paris in May 1968 epitomize this shift—a

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‘revolution’ which began in the university world but which spilled over into industrial and political unrest. Against this background, traditional, often Christian-based, values could no longer be taken for granted; questioned by many, they were abandoned by increasing numbers. A consequent loss of confidence on the part of the churches was hardly surprising, a collapse which provoked in the first instance considerable confusion. Bit by bit, however, the emphasis changed as confusion gave way to calls for equally radical reform. All might still be well if the churches could shake off their image of belonging essentially to the past; they must present themselves instead as modern, up to date and, above all, relevant.

The metamorphosis in Catholicism brought about by the Second Vatican Council (1962–5) should be seen in this light, noting that the repercussions of Vatican II extended far beyond the Catholic Church as such. Adrian Hastings (2005), for example, has no doubt about the epochal nature of this episode; he sees the Council as the most important ecclesiastical event of the century, never mind the 1960s. ‘It so greatly changed the character of by far the largest communion of Christendom ... that no one has been left unaffected’ (2005: 525). The deliberations of the Council were wide-ranging; its essence, however, is captured by the idea of *aggiornamento*, meaning literally ‘bringing up to date’. The shift was all the more dramatic in the Catholic Church because it had been delayed longer here than elsewhere. As an idea, *aggiornamento* sums up better than anything else the mood of the 1960s.

This decade, moreover, exemplifies a peak in secular confidence in the West and for understandable reasons. National economies were expanding fast and standards of living continued to rise. Modernization, it seemed, was bringing good things to appreciable numbers of people. Modernization, moreover, was

invariably linked to secularization—the connection was rarely questioned. It was widely assumed in everyday life and was equally embedded in public discourse. But, like all good things, the 1960s came to an end. The *dénouement* was dramatic. Within a few short years, the oil crisis was dominating the world scene. The economic situation wavered accordingly, in Europe as elsewhere: currencies were in difficulties, inflation was rising, and unemployment levels began to climb. In terms of religion, a rather different but equally important shift was taking place: namely a growing awareness that populations that had been arriving in Europe in response to the need for labour in the 1960s were becoming a permanent feature in the major European economies (i.e. Britain, France, West Germany, and the Netherlands).

p. 276 In retrospect, if not at the time, 1979 can be seen as a turning point. It is, according to Christian Caryl (2013), the year in which revolutionary Islam emerges as a global political force (most obviously in Iran), and in which the notion of the market begins to capture economic thinking (in places as far apart as Britain and China). It is also the year in which the first inklings of resistance to Soviet domination begin to appear in both Europe and Afghanistan (in both cases motivated by religion, though differently so). The key insight of Caryl's book, however, is to relate these stirrings to a much broader narrative in which the significance of religion on the one hand and the market on the other is asserted over the secular and the (socialist) state, challenging thereby two key assumptions of the European (and particularly the French) Enlightenment. It is this combination which led inexorably to the collapse of the Soviet Union some ten years later—an event, which, like the Iranian Revolution in 1979, caught almost everyone (academics, analysts, politicians, and policy makers) by surprise.

It is clear that religion was but one factor among many in the break-up of the Soviet Union. That said, its significance was considerable both before and after 1989. With respect to the former, the roles of newly elected John Paul II and the Catholic Church in Poland are universally recognized. The pope, accompanied by the world's media, returned to his homeland for his first pastoral visit in 1979; the Polish authorities were powerless as the population flocked to attend mass. Spirits were lifted and the Church affirmed as a channel of peaceful opposition, setting in place an inexorable chain of events. Interestingly, an equally effective example can be found in East Germany, where—at the critical moment in 1989—a tiny, infiltrated, and seriously weakened Lutheran Church also became the focus of political resistance. In neither case—whether solidly Catholic, or falteringly Lutheran—was this evidence of secularization.

The fourth post-war 'generation' covers the period before and after the new millennium—decades which saw the war in Yugoslavia on the one hand (armed conflict started as early as 1991), but on the other the rapid expansion of the European Union (EU), a rather more positive story. The place of religion in the tragedy that took place in the Balkans is complex to say the least—easy generalizations are best avoided. The role of religion in both the creation and expansion of the EU, and the many and various religious organizations now active within it, are covered in detail in Part III of this *Handbook*. A third element in this period is quite different and reflects a point already mentioned: that is the growing diversity in the West as continuing economic growth brought with it persistent if not always even flows of migrants from different parts of the world. The movement of people as such will be covered in the section on Trends and Countertrends, but it is worth noting an associated mutation at this stage. In the early post-war period new arrivals to Europe were categorized in terms of their race or ethnicity, generating important—but notably secular—discussions about racial, ethnic, and national equalities. Towards the end of the century however, the debate turned increasingly to the question of religion—a shift that quite clearly discomforted Europe's increasingly self-conscious secularists, among them intellectuals, analysts, and policy makers.

So much so that it is worth asking whether a new (a fifth) generation is beginning to emerge as the second decade of the twenty-first century merges into the third: one that is more rather than less conscious of national borders, whether these be defined against supranational entities, such as the EU, or against the incursions of migrant labour, which are seen as threats not only to jobs and services but also to national identities. This tendency became markedly more visible as the levels of migration rose as a result of



seemingly unending conflict in the Middle East and beyond. Paradoxically, given the advances of secularization in much of Western Europe, being Christian—as opposed to Muslim (say)—becomes a revealing indicator in the self-definition of significant numbers of European citizens and in the political movements that respond to them. Among other places, this shift can be seen in the UK (more especially in England), and ↪ Denmark; in France, Italy, (former East) Germany, and Austria; and in rather more sinister forms in Poland and Hungary.

## Trends and countertrends

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Turning now to trends rather than chronology, there are five very different factors, which—taken together—contribute to a better understanding of secularization in post-war Europe (Davie, 2006). These are: the continuing role of Christianity in shaping European culture; an awareness that the historic churches still have a place in the lives of modern Europeans, but are no longer able to influence the beliefs and behaviour of the majority of the population; an observable change in patterns of attachment to religion, in which obligation has given way to choice; the arrival into Western Europe of groups of people from many different parts of the world; and the reactions of Europe's more secular constituencies to the increasing salience of religion in public debate. All five are present in most parts of the continent but are differently weighted in different places. More importantly they push and pull in different directions: some point unequivocally in the direction of secularization; others nuance this view.

This chapter has already made reference to the formative factors that come together in the making a remaking of Europe (O'Connell, 1991). The tension to note at this point is the enduring role of Christianity in shaping European culture, despite growing evidence of secularization. One example will suffice: the Christian tradition has had a continuing—and probably irreversible—effect in determining the most basic categories of human existence (time and space) in this part of the world. For example, both weeks, weekends, holidays, and celebrations follow the Christian cycle,<sup>7</sup> even if the major festivals of the Christian year have lost their resonance for large sections of the population. Rather similar resilience can be found in terms of space, keeping in mind that the dominant patterns of religion in Europe are, and remain, territorial—finding expression in the institutional forms that have framed European life for centuries (most obviously the parish). It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Christian churches predominate, some of which retain huge symbolic value for the populations that surround them. From the largest city to the smallest village, Europeans continue to orient themselves with reference to religious buildings even if they seldom enter them for worship. In short, Europe is evolving fast, but the legacies of the past remain deeply embedded in both the physical and cultural environment—an inheritance that can be reactivated for political as well as religious reasons.

Physical and cultural presence is one thing; a hands-on role in the everyday lives of European people quite another. Commentators of all kinds agree that, with very few exceptions, the latter is neither a realistic, nor a desirable option for the historic churches ↪ of Europe in the new millennium. This is hardly surprising given the convincing evidence for secularization revealed in the Europe-wide statistical enquiries outlined earlier in this chapter (see notes 1 to 4). The data in each of these cover a wide range of variables, in which the overall trends are very clear: in Western Europe (if not always further east), the graphs point downwards. It is important, however, to expand this statement: what might be termed 'hard' and 'soft' variables move at different speeds, and different sections of the population are more or less associated with these trends. The trends themselves are variously present in different parts of the continent, as indeed in individual countries, for particular, historically generated reasons. Confessional differences are related to these variations but not always straightforwardly. Each of these points will be taken in turn.

There exists, first of all, a set of indicators which measure firm commitments to (a) institutional life and (b) *credal* statements of religion (in this case Christianity). No observer of the current religious scene disputes that these indicators are both interrelated and in serious decline. Fewer Europeans go to church than they used to and fewer ‘believers’ sign up to the Christian creeds in their entirety. As a result, the idea of a common narrative (of Christian liturgy or of Christian language and metaphor) is eroding fast. Conversely a manifest reduction in the ‘hard’ indicators of religious life has not, in the short term at least, had a similar effect on rather less rigorous dimensions of religiousness. Between two-thirds and three-quarters of West Europeans assent to ‘belief in God’ in its less rigorous forms, and roughly similar proportions touch base with the institutional churches at some point in their lives, often at times of crisis (Pew Research Center, 2018a). There is a growing body of qualitative as well as quantitative work on this section of the population (Davie, 1994, 2000, 2007; Day, 2011).

With respect to both hard and soft variables, the patterns which emerge are gendered and generational. Women are less ready than men to abandon their connections to religion, however understood, a finding which holds across generations. Each generation, however, is markedly less engaged than the one that preceded it—a trend that is unlikely to be reversed. More complex are the national, regional, and confessional variations. Broadly speaking the Protestant parts of Europe are more secular than the Catholic or Orthodox equivalents, but there are exceptions in every case. In Northern Europe, membership of the Lutheran churches remains high in what are otherwise noticeably secular countries. In the Catholic nations further south, Belgium and France lie at the secular end of the spectrum as opposed to Italy and Portugal at the more religious; Spain has shifted from religious to secular in a generation. And even in Orthodox Europe, there are variations among the strong national—indeed nationalist—churches where religious belonging is often equated with national identity. The reports of the Pew Research Center, *Being Christian in Western Europe* (2018a), and *Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe* (2017a) flesh out the picture outlined above and repay careful reading.

p. 279 Cutting across these differences is a significant mutation in the ways that Europeans think about religion. What was once simply imposed on Europeans (with all the negative connotations of this word), or inherited (which has a rather more positive spin), becomes instead a matter of personal choice. Religiously active (and indeed less active) Europeans ↪ now attach themselves to their churches (old and new)—and to an increasingly wide range of alternatives—because they choose to, sometimes for a short period and sometimes for longer, sometimes regularly and sometimes occasionally, but quite clearly feel no *obligation* either to attend that church in the first place or to continue if they no longer feel inclined.

Two points follow from this. The first is theoretical and raises a long-running debate regarding the effect of diversity—and thus choice—on the likelihood of secularization. Is it the case that the very existence of different forms of religious life necessarily undermines the truth or truth-claims embodied by any one of them, thus leading to secularization (Berger, 1967; Taylor, 2007)? Or is it the case that lively competition between religious organizations not only stimulates the market in religious activity, but drives up interest in religion as such (Stark and Bainbridge, 1985, 1987; see also Davie, 2013, ch. 4)? More important for this chapter are the choices made by modern Europeans.

The following paragraphs relate in particular to Northern Europe, but their content is doubly interesting in the sense that it reveals not only the strengths and weaknesses of the present situation, but that the predictions of an earlier generation (both scholars and church people) were largely incorrect. Specifically, in the current period Northern European Christians are disproportionately drawn to two kinds of religious organization: charismatic evangelical churches on the one hand and cathedrals or city-centre churches on the other. The former epitomizes firm commitments, strong fellowship, and conservative teaching, offset by the warmth of the charismatic experience. The latter allows a much more individualistic (even anonymous) expression of religious commitment, where the appeal is often associated with the beauty of



the building, the quality of the music, the nature of the liturgy, and the excellence of the preaching. In both cases there is a noticeable *experiential* element, albeit very differently expressed.

In the mid post-war decades, notably the 1960s, something rather different was envisaged. Conservative teaching was out of fashion and cathedrals were classed as ‘dinosaurs’—in the sense that they were less and less relevant to the modern world and very expensive to maintain. They are still expensive to maintain, but the data indicate that they are increasingly attractive to late modern Europeans, whether they come as regular worshippers, less regular worshippers, tourists, or pilgrims—noting that the lines between these categories are distinctly porous. Indeed, pilgrimage is an increasingly important, and much studied, element in its own right.<sup>8</sup> Conversely, rather more liberal forms of Protestantism, noticeably fashionable in the 1960s, have not fulfilled their earlier promise. There are, of course, exceptions but by and large the purely cerebral has less appeal in the twenty-first century than many people thought would be the case.

p. 280 Two inter-related points link this factor to the one that follows. The first indicates a shift in organizational forms right across Europe. This is best captured by an economic analogy in the sense that there is a discernible if gradual shift away from what might be called a public utility model of religious provision (i.e. the parochially organized historic churches) towards a way of working that is more like a market. In some parts of Europe, this has barely begun; in others it is well developed—those, moreover, where secularization is more advanced. The reason for this is clear: the historically dominant church in question is no longer able to resist this trend and becomes itself simply one option among many for those (a declining number) who remain active in their religious lives. The second point to note is that incipient markets are urban rather than rural and are noticeably expanded by immigration.

No observer of the religious scene in post-war Europe can ignore the influence of new arrivals, mindful that up to now (2020), there have been four stages in this process. The first recalls the urgent need for labour in the expanding economies of post-war Europe—especially in Britain, France, West Germany, and the Netherlands. The second gathered speed in the 1990s and included, in addition to the places listed above, the Nordic countries, Ireland, and the countries of Mediterranean Europe (Greece, Italy, Spain, and Portugal)—noting that many of these had until well into the twentieth century been countries of emigration rather than immigration. The turn from one to the other was extraordinarily rapid. A third stage took a different form: this was the movement of people from Eastern to Western Europe prompted by the enlargements of the EU in 2004 and 2007, a trend partially arrested by the economic crisis of 2007–8. A new phase began in 2015, provoking widespread debate. This was the flight of many different groups of people from the Middle East, especially from Syria, as the violence and destruction brought about by the civil war escalated.

Almost always, the motivations for migration (both push and pull) have been economic rather than religious. But either way the implications for the religious life of Europe are immense. For a start, new arrivals have brought new life into the Christian churches, as traditional flows have been reversed. No longer are Europeans seen as the ‘suppliers’; they are rather on the receiving end as innovative (often Pentecostal) expressions of Christianity establish themselves in the larger cities of the continent—congregations which have become some of the most vibrant in modern Europe. They are a recognized and increasingly well-studied phenomenon (see, for example, ter Haar, 1998, Goodhew, 2012, 2018). Indeed, the relative vibrancy of urban rather rural churches is important in its own right; it too subverts earlier expectations that modernization implied urbanization and that both encouraged secularization.

Even more significant is the arrival into Europe of other faith populations: specifically, significant numbers of Muslims (Pew Research Center, 2017b) and in Britain, of Sikhs and Hindus as well. The reason is clear: here are sizeable communities of people whose cultural heritage is very different from the majority and whose religious lives do not fit easily into the ‘categories’ developed to deal with these issues in post-Enlightenment Europe—notably the notion that faith should be a private matter proscribed from public life

(i.e. from the state and its various services). Those who have been socialized elsewhere have markedly different convictions, and offer—simply by their presence—a challenge to the European way of doing things. It is equally important to remember that the impact of these encounters varies from country to country, and depends as much on the host society as on the new arrivals themselves.

p. 281 Beneath these differences lies however a common factor: the growing presence of other faith communities in general and of the Muslim population in particular, is challenging some deeply held European assumptions regarding the presence of religion in the public sphere. A growing list of episodes has brought the question of religion to the forefront of public debate. A by no means exhaustive catalogue would include the Rushdie controversy in Britain which erupted in 1989; the *affaire du foulard* in France which began at much the same time; the murders of Pim Fortuyn (2002) and Theo van Gogh (2004) in the Netherlands (together with the subsequent defection of Ayaan Hirsi Ali to the United States); the furore over the Danish cartoons of Muhammad in 2005; the bombings in the transport systems of both Madrid and London in 2004 and 2005 respectively; the challenge to the legality of minarets in a Swiss referendum (2009); and in some parts of Europe the total ban on wearing the *burqa* or *niqab* in public (in 2011 in both France and Belgium, an example followed elsewhere). These issues, it is clear, erupt in different places. The debate about representations of Muhammad spread to Sweden (from 2007 onwards), and in 2015 it reignited violently in both France and Denmark with dramatic consequences. The discussion has re-emerged in reaction to the increased flows of migrants from the Middle East. For the most part these arrivals have been peaceful; less so the reactions to them, as ‘Christian (and indeed secular) Europe’ resists ‘Muslim invasion’, backed by populist political parties and similarly inclined sections of the media.

The paradox underpinning this chapter becomes ever clearer: that is the rising profile of religion in public debate alongside falling indicators of religious activity. Central to this anomaly are the reactions of Europe’s more vociferous secularists to the events listed above and the questions that lie beneath them. It is true that secular voices have existed in Europe as long as religious ones; they have ebbed and flowed over many centuries. The current instantiation is however distinctive: increasing religious diversity has, it seems, challenged taken-for-granted secularization and the assumed elisions of modern, urban, and secular. Instead, visible religion—discovered mostly in cities—has provoked visible secularism. Secular constituencies, however, just like their religious counterparts, are not all the same—a further reminder that the secularization process has evolved differently in different European countries.

## Two questions

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Two further questions remain. The first is driven by the paradox outlined in the previous paragraph. A number of commentators are provoked by the mismatch between declining activity and urgent (often intemperate) debate to ask whether a revised approach to secularization might be required. A new—and somewhat controversial—vocabulary is emerging to express this possibility, as Europe is described as *post-secular*, a way of thinking underpinned by *post-secularism* (Habermas, 2006). An important literature has grown up in this field that demands attention (Molendijk, Beaumont, and Jedan, 2010; Baker and Beaumont, p. 282 2011; Beckford, 2012). Broadly speaking two reactions <sup>4</sup> can be discerned. On the one hand, those who have embraced a unitary view of secularization find it necessary to look for an alternative vocabulary to capture the complexities of the present moment. On the other, those who have defined secularization as a multifaceted and contingent process are more able to contain the current contradictions within the existing terminology (Joas and Wiegand, 2009; Martin, 2011). Almost everyone, however, acknowledges a new stage in the evolution of religion in Europe.

The second question is related in so far as it asks to what extent the relative secularity of this part of the world should be considered an ‘exceptional case’ in global terms rather than a global prototype (Davie,

2002; Berger, Davie, and Fokas, 2008). This way of thinking reverses the essential question: instead of asking what Europe is in term of its religious existence, it asks what Europe is not. It is not (yet) a vibrant religious market such as that found in the United States; it is not a part of the world where Christianity is growing exponentially, very often in Pentecostal forms, as is the case in the Global South; it is not a part of the world dominated by faiths other than Christian, but is increasingly penetrated by these; and it is not for the most part subject to the violence often associated with religion and religious difference in other parts of the globe—the more so if religion becomes entangled in political conflict. Hence the inevitable, if at times disturbing (for some) conclusion: that the patterns of religion in modern Europe, notably its relative secularity, might be an exceptional case in global terms. The point is all the more critical given that the paradigms of social science have emerged from the European case and are very largely premised on the notion that modern societies are likely to be secular societies. It follows that the traditional, European-based understandings of social science may be markedly less suitable for the study of religion in other parts of the world. Indeed, they are not always helpful in Europe itself given the growing complexities of religious life in the early years of the twenty-first century.

## Conclusion

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This chapter has covered conceptual and empirical approaches to secularization and the rich sources of data that exist in the European case. It has looked at the long-term evolution of the secular in this part of the world, but finds its focus in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This period has been considered both chronologically and thematically with the following question in mind: is Europe secular because it is modern, or is Europe secular because it is European? Given the growing conviction that Europe is unusually secular in global terms, it seems that the latter is more likely. Secularization is central to the self-understanding of modern Europe; it should not be assumed, however, that secularization is a necessary—thus universal—concomitant of modernization.

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## Notes

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- 1 *Eurobarometers* are published twice yearly by the *European* Commission. Selected issues have information about religion in the Member States of the EU. See for example European Commission (2012).
- 2 The European Values Study (EVS) is a large-scale, cross-national, cross-sectional survey research programme on basic human values. Religion is one of six themes examined. In-depth enquiries have been carried out in 1981, 1990, 1999, 2008, and 2017; the range of countries has increased over the period. See <https://europeanvaluesstudy.eu/about-evs/>.
- 3 The International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) is a continuous program of cross-national collaboration running annual surveys on topics important for the social sciences. The ISSP Religion module series comprises four cross-national surveys conducted in 1991, 1998, 2008, and 2018. The range of countries, especially in recent years extends well beyond Europe. See <https://www.gesis.org/issp/modules/issp-modules-by-topic/religion>.
- 4 See in particular Pew Research Center (2017a, 2017b, 2018a, 2018b). These are detailed, empirically based, admirably clear, and easily accessible accounts of different aspects of religion across Europe.
- 5 Figures 15.1 and 15.2 have been prepared by Gina Zurlo. We are grateful for her help.
- 6 This is a highly selective list which should be seen simply as indicative. The secularization debate has generated a huge volume of scholarship in many languages right across Europe, and beyond.
- 7 Attempts by both the French and Russian revolutionaries to alter the working week did not endure; key revolutionary events, however, are memorialized in national calendars.
- 8 The evidence for a growing interest in pilgrimage right across Europe is considerable. It is epitomized in the popularity of the Camino de Santiago, a network of pilgrim routes across Europe which converge at the Cathedral of St James at Santiago de Compostela in Northern Spain.

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CHAPTER

## 16 Religion and Politics in the European Union

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### Abstract

This chapter investigates the political mobilization of religious networks in the construction of the European Union by focusing on the role of key religious organizations in dialogue with European institutions, from the 1950 Schuman Declaration to the institutionalization of religious dialogue in Article 17 of the 2009 Lisbon Treaty. It sets out a typology of transnational religious structures, elaborates the main policy areas for religious/convictional actors, and discusses major challenges to the present structure and nature of the European Union, paying particular attention to the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Brexit), the movement of forcibly displaced populations, and the rise of populism and right-wing nationalism.

**Keywords:** [religious networks](#), [Schuman Declaration](#), [Lisbon Treaty](#), [religious representations](#), [Brexit](#), [displaced populations](#), [populism](#), [nationalism](#)

**Subject:** [History of Religion](#), [Religion](#)

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THE European Union (EU) has had an uneasy relationship with religion. As a general rule, the EU does not have a pan-European policy on religion. Religion–state relations are shaped by the national legislation of individual EU Member States rather than directly from the corridors of power in Brussels and Strasbourg. The ‘silence’ of European institutions towards religion can be summarized in three key quotes made by two presidents of the European Commission. It took until 1968, when, for the first time, in a public speech issued on behalf of the Commission, President Jean Rey, presented the lifting of customs duties between the six Member States of the European Economic Community and included a short and rather unusual remark: ‘Two great spiritual developments dominate this second half of the twentieth century: the reconciliation of the churches and the reconciliation of the peoples. The first is not a political matter, but the second is our affair.’ Rey’s statement was unprecedented and did not lead to further public discussion from the Commission. For nearly two decades, EU officials refrained from making public references to the role played by religious communities. This attitude changed after the fall of communism. In 1990, in a behind-closed-doors meeting with a group of Protestant and Anglican church leaders, President Jacques Delors surprised the participants by stating that ‘the European Community lacks a heart and soul’. Two years later, on 4 February 1992, after meeting Bishop Klaus Engelhardt, President of the Council of the Protestant Church in



Germany, Delors went even further stating the widely quoted comment that ‘If in the next ten years we haven’t managed to give a soul to Europe, to give it spirituality and meaning, the game will be up.’<sup>1</sup>

p. 288 Rey’s and Delors’ quotes summarize the engagement of EU officials with religion. Religion was perceived as a private matter for politicians and public alike, and the discussion of religious matters was seen as an inevitable source of tension. In the early 1950s, decades of European integration, Cold War tensions and the informal dialogue between religious and political leaders that developed before and during the Second World War were fundamental to the ways in which EU officials engaged with religion. After Delors’ encouragement to churches to reflect on the ‘heart and soul’ of Europe’, however, a large number of religious representations opened offices in Brussels and Strasbourg and started to engage in dialogue with European institutions.

All that said, and despite the absence of religion in the *aquis communautaire* and the widespread perception that religious actors were passive in the process of European integration, contacts between religious and political leaders, albeit in many cases informal, have remained constant from the May 1950 Schuman Declaration until today. In 2009, however, a significant change took place. For the first time in the history of the EU, Article 17 of the Lisbon Treaty institutionalized ‘an open, transparent and regular’ dialogue between European institutions and ‘churches, religions and communities of conviction’.<sup>2</sup> This institutionalization draws on the long history of the European project, a novel process for religious communities, European institutions, and EU Member States alike.

This chapter investigates the political mobilization of religious networks in the construction of the EU by focusing on key religious organizations in dialogue with European institutions. It then presents a typology of transnational religious structures. The proposed division takes into account the political history of religious dialogue in the EU: the first section discusses the view of European institutions, while the second highlights the approach of religious and convictional actors. The chapter continues by probing the main policy areas regarding religion and discusses major challenges to the contemporary structure and nature of the EU. It focuses on religion and EU membership, including the debate on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU; the forced movement of populations as a result of the conflict in eastern Ukraine, the Middle East, and North Africa; and the rise of populism and right-wing nationalism.

## Religious dialogue with European institutions

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p. 289 The construction of the EU has been a predominately political and social project with little visibility in religious matters. The signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957 and the merging of the executive bodies of the three European Communities (EC) in the late 1950s occurred at a time when academic scholars were— with some notable exceptions—convinced by the inevitability of secularization which characterized much of post-war Europe (Martin, 1978; Vincent and Willaime, 1993; Robbers, 1996; Davie, 2000, 2002, 2006; Nelsen, Guth, and Fraser, 2001; Byrnes and Katzenstein, 2006; Schlesinger and Foret, 2006; Chenaux, 2007; Berger, Davie, and Fokas, 2008; Madeley, 2009; Leustean and Madeley, 2010; McCrea, 2010; De Vlieger, 2011; Werkner and Liedhegener, 2013; Chaplain and Wilton, 2016).

A few months after the Schuman Declaration, in September 1950, a transnational group of Protestant and Anglican politicians and church people established a group titled the ‘Ecumenical Commission on European Cooperation’ (ECEC) which provided expertise to churches on the process of European integration (Greschat and Loth, 1994; Leustean, 2014). Under pressure from the World Council of Churches (WCC), the group changed its name twice: in 1953, to the ‘Committee on the Christian Responsibility for European Cooperation’ (CCREC) and, in 1966, to the ‘Christian Study Group on European Unity’ (CSGEU). The group membership disbanded in 1974 after holding its last meeting in Roehampton.

The ECEC was informally affiliated to the WCC and had an international membership of politicians and church people from the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and other West European countries which later joined the EC (Britain, Denmark, and Sweden). Its membership represented a wide political and religious spectrum in Western Europe, bringing together experts affiliated with both the EC and the Council of Europe. The expertise of the group became increasingly influential as a number of its members acquired positions of leadership in Western Europe, such as Jean Rey, European Commissioner in charge of External Relations (1958–67) and President of the European Commission (1967–70); Gustav Heinemann, President of Federal Republic of Germany (1969–74), and Max Kohnstamm, General Secretary of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community (1952–6) and Vice-President of the Action Committee for the United States of Europe (1956–75).<sup>3</sup>

p. 290 Furthermore, in the 1960s, the CCREC members were instrumental in supporting the establishment of ecumenical bodies in Brussels. This was particularly visible in 1964 when leading church people from the six EC countries, Britain, and Switzerland established a transnational network in Brussels, titled the 'Consultative Committee of Churches for the European Communities'.<sup>4</sup> In 1966, the Consultative Committee was paralleled by the establishment of an office of laity at the initiative of officials working in the European institutions, 'the Ecumenical Centre in Brussels'.<sup>5</sup> Both ecumenical bodies shared the same office and monitored the policy making of the European Communities. Their main functions were both to inform churches of decisions taken at European level but also to involve national churches in reflecting on the process of European integration (Zeilstra, 1995; Coupland, 2006). The significance of these bodies was evident in providing expertise not only to religious organizations as such but also to the network of political organizations which formed the Christian democratic parties in post-war Europe (van Hecke and Gerard, 2004; Kaiser, 2007).

While concrete steps were taking place in Brussels, the non-public response of churches towards European integration was mainly due to the impact of the Cold War. From the beginning the European Communities were a political project with a defined regional scope and, the consequent Western regionalism was perceived by religious leaders as an obstacle to the dialogue between East and West.

Although ECSC countries were predominantly Catholic, relations between European institutions and the Roman Catholic Church developed on the initiatives of local dioceses, at least in France and Belgium, rather than as the policy of the Holy See towards European federalism. Between 1950 and 1952 the diocese in Strasbourg had a small office monitoring the Council of Europe; however, the office was closed due to financial reasons and lack of interest from the Holy See (Chenaux, 2007; Sutton 2007, 2012; Leustean, 2013). A new office was opened by the Jesuits in Strasbourg in 1956, which aimed to provide a link between the Council of Europe and the Roman Catholic Church. This office, titled the 'Catholic European Study Information Centre' (*Office Catholique d'Information sur les Problèmes Européens*—OCIFE), opened a branch in Brussels in 1963. OCIFE ran in parallel with the 'European Catholic Centre' (*Foyer Catholique Européen*) which was established in the same year to look after the pastoral needs of EU officials and their families in Brussels. After the Second Vatican Council a large number of religious bodies entered into contact with European institutions, some of which opened offices in Brussels to provide both expertise and a global network on education, development, humanitarian aid, and diplomatic relations, such as the Council of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe in 1963;<sup>6</sup> the CIDSE—*Coopération internationale pour le développement et la solidarité* in 1967; the Catholic International Education Office in 1974; and, the European Committee for Catholic Education in 1974. The increasing number of Catholic offices in Brussels was supported by the appointment of a Papal Nuncio in charge of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and the European Community in 1970.

The first elections of the European Parliament in 1979 encouraged further developments in the Brussels strategy of churches. The Quaker Council for European Affairs opened an office in the same year while the Holy See established an official representation titled 'the Commission of Bishops' Conferences of the

European Community' (COMECE) which provided a direct link between Catholic bishops in the European Community and European institutions in 1980.

Both Catholic and Protestant offices in Brussels and Strasbourg operated with a small number of personnel, mainly appointed by national religious hierarchies, and with limited financial support from their churches and the European Commission. These offices brought together not only religious leaders from EC Member States but also officials working in European institutions who provided expertise in areas traditionally considered outside the interest of churches, such as agriculture and migration.

The exchange of information and expertise between churches and European institutions reflected the private–public nature of religion. The concept of religion was associated with the personal interests of some EU officials, while religious representations were regarded as part of the increasing number of civil society organizations lobbying in Brussels. The EU officials' involvement in religious representations had a double impact. First, it led to increasing contact between Catholic and Protestant offices which culminated in the 1974 Roehampton conference. The conference represented the climax of inter-religious relations in Western Europe and was dedicated to the process of European integration. Second, the conference led to the establishment of a Joint Protestant–Catholic Working Group in Brussels to provide a theoretical investigation of the 'purpose' (*finalité*) of European integration and a practical analysis of the role of churches, particularly in the field of development policy. This group became an established representation named the 'European Ecumenical Commission on Development' and ran from 1975 to 1996.

A new turn in relations between European institutions and religious communities took place in the early 1980s. On the recommendation of Secretary General Émile Noël, President Gaston Thorn of the European Commission appointed Umberto Stefani, Director at the Secretariat General, as Special Counsellor in September 1983, in charge of compiling a census of religious organizations and to act as an informal liaison officer with the Holy See. Stefani retained his position during the first years of Jacques Delors' presidency and was instrumental in organizing the visits of Pope John Paul II (1978–2005) to European institutions in 1985 and 1988.

p. 292 Delors' interest in religious and ethical issues and the increasing mobilization of religions on European issues in the context of the Single European Act led to an ↴ increasing number of meetings with religious and ethical organizations. New religious bodies set up offices in Brussels and engaged in an informal type of dialogue. These included the European Union of Jewish Students which opened an office in 1982, while the European Commission received delegations from the European Jewish Congress in 1987 and the Istanbul-based Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1989. After the death of Jean-Louis Lacroix, who worked on ethical issues and was one of Delors' closest advisors, Delors appointed the so-called 'Lacroix Group' of advisors in 1987. Although the group did not have an official mandate to liaise with churches, in March 1989, Delors established a new advisory group named the 'Forward Studies Unit' (FSU) (*Cellule de prospective*) under the leadership of Jean-Claude Morel, a former Director-General, and Jérôme Vignon, Coordinator of Studies. The FSU maintained the Lacroix Group's expertise and was asked to establish regular contact with churches and religious communities.

The FSU's official mandate on religion led to the appointment of Marc Luyckx as Secretary in charge of religious dialogue in September 1990. Luyckx was a former Catholic priest with a doctorate in Russian and Greek theology from the Pontificio Istituto Orientale. He served as Secretary of the European Ecumenical Organization for Development from 1985 until 1989 and was directly involved in the joint work of Catholic–Protestant representations in Brussels. In 1990, he wrote a report on a comparative analysis of the Abrahamic religions and atheist communities and concluded that, despite the process of secularization, there was an increasing interest in spirituality coupled with science and technology. Luyckx's drive in favour of closer relations between the Commission and a wide range of religious and convictional communities that needed to be better organized at pan-European level was paralleled by a large number of

new religious representations. They included: churches (the Brussels Office of the Evangelical Church in Germany in 1990; the Jesuit Refugee Service Europe in 1991; the Liaison Office of the Orthodox Church to the European Union in 1994, under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate); faiths (CEJI—A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe in 1990; the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations in 1996; the European Bahá'í Business Forum in 1993); and communities of conviction (European Humanist Federation in 1991).

In October 1996, Luyckx was replaced by Thomas Jansen, Secretary-General of the European People's Party, who retained his position during Jacques Santer's presidency. In the same year, the FSU was renamed as the Group of Political Advisors to the European Commission (GOPA). During Romano Prodi's presidency, Michael Weninger, a former Austrian diplomat with qualifications in theology and philosophy, was put in charge of contact with churches and religious communities within GOPA.

p. 293 Both Jansen's and Weninger's leaderships coincided with the launch of a European initiative titled *A Soul for Europe: Ethics and Spirituality*, which was intended to promote religious dialogue between Christians, Jews, Muslims, and Humanists and was administered by the European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society (EECCS). The initiative had its origins in Delors' meeting with religious leaders in 1990 in which he suggested that Europe needed 'a heart and soul' and led to regular meetings, many of which took place with the support of the European Parliament (Jansen, 2000; de Charentenay, 2003; Massignon, 2007; Weninger, 2007).<sup>7</sup>

The establishment of the Convention on the Future of Europe in 2001 and discussions on the Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe (2004) brought new religious actors into contact with European institutions. However, the decision to exclude references to 'God' and 'Christianity' in the Preamble of the Constitution, and debates in the intergovernmental conference between 2003 and 2004 revealed that despite an increase in religious lobbying in Brussels, national governments continued to have a powerful voice in issues related to religion.

The institutionalization of religious dialogue in the EU was the product of intergovernmental negotiations during the Convention. In 2005, GOPA was renamed the Bureau of European Policy Advisors (BEPA). In 2007, Jorge César das Neves, a Portuguese official with a background in philosophy, was appointed to oversee relations with religious and convictional communities; he retained the position until January 2012 when he was replaced by Katharina von Schnurbein, a German national who was previously the Commission Spokesperson for Employment, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities and the Chair of the European Affairs Committee at the German Bundestag in Berlin. Von Schnurbein retained her mandate until July 2017.

In October 2017, during Jean-Claude Juncker's Presidency, Vincent Depaigne, a lawyer in the Fundamental Rights Policy at the Directorate General Justice and Consumers was appointed as the European Commission Coordinator for religious dialogue. He was based in the Directorate General Justice rather than the headquarters of the Commission (as was customary), indicating a shift in the ways in which the Commission engaged with religion. The institutionalization of religious dialogue as part of Article 17 led to an increasing number of meetings organized by each European institution. While in many cases meetings led to sharing expertise between religious communities and European institutions, a significant number of gatherings were merely 'photo-opportunities' which benefited religious leaders on their return to national capitals (Leustean, 2012).

After the European External Action Service (EEAS) was set up in 2010, Merete Bilde, who previously worked for the Policy Unit of EU High Representative Javier Solana, was appointed Policy Advisor whose remit included religious issues. In the last decade, the EEAS has been one of the most active institutions in providing expertise to EU officials on religion. In 2014, it began an annual programme offering training on religious literacy. Two years later, it brought together diplomats and religious practitioners on both sides of

the Atlantic in a platform titled ‘The Transatlantic Policy Network on Religion and Diplomacy’, based at the University of Cambridge. In September 2019, the EEAS launched a platform titled the ‘Global Exchange on Religion in Society’, which aims to encourage the work of grassroots religious activists across the world. The initiative, which had the support of the EU High Representative Federica Mogherini, was summarized as an ‘Erasmus for civil society actors working on faith and social inclusion’ (EEAS, 2019).

After 2009, the European Parliament worked together with the EEAS on identifying the means of advancing ‘the protection of the freedom of religion or belief’. Fearghas O Béara, an Irish national who held a number of advisory roles in the European Parliament, was appointed administrator in charge of the dialogue with religious and philosophical organizations. In June 2013, a working group between the European Parliament and the EEAS was instrumental in the adoption by the European Council of the *EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief*. As a result, in February 2016, President Jean-Claude Juncker established the position of a Special Envoy for the Promotion of the Freedom of Religion or Belief outside the EU. Ján Figel, who was a European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture, and Youth between 2004 and 2009, was appointed the first Special Envoy, a position he held until the Juncker Commission finished its term in November 2019. As part of implementing Article 17, the European Parliament has regularly organized seminars and public events on issues of ‘religion’ and ‘conviction’ with the direct support of one of its Vice-Presidents (Perchoc, 2017; European Parliament, 2018, 2020).

## A typology of religious representations in Brussels

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Research on material collected from the archives and public documents issued by the European Commission, Catholic, Protestant, and Humanist bodies (Leustean, 2012) showed that 120 organizations were in dialogue with the European Commission from 1957 until the early 2010s, eighty-two of which had representation in Brussels. Although not definitive, and not including the many other religious and convictional organizations that approached the European institutions informally, the relatively high numbers demonstrate the increasing interest in ‘religion’ and ‘conviction’ among policy practitioners.

An overview of religious representations in Brussels shows that the increase in their numbers has been directly linked to the political evolution of the EU. Before the 1950s Brussels housed offices for a number of Catholic bodies, such as the European Young Christian Workers and the Conference of International Catholic Organizations. The most significant increase in the number of Catholic organizations was visible after the 1951 establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community and the 1966 Merger Treaty of the European Community. The latter increase was also linked to the Second Vatican Council which led to a new stage in inter-church mobilization towards European institutions. While the Roman Catholic Church has remained the dominant confession in terms of the number of religious representations in Brussels, after the 1986 Single European Act the non-Catholic, other faith, and other convictional bodies experienced a steep rise. Religious representations in the EU are divided into diplomatic representations; official representation of churches; inter-religious organizations or networks; confessional or convictional organizations; religious orders; and single-issue organizations (Leustean, 2012) (see Table 16.1).

## Diplomatic representations

The Roman Catholic Church is the only religious confession with a diplomatic representation in Brussels, and a Papal Nuncio for the European Community was appointed in 1970. According to diplomatic law, the Papal Nuncio represents the Holy See and has a symbolic mission as the Doyen of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to European institutions. Concurrent with the increasing number of representations after the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, the Order of Malta entered into contact with the European Commission in the early 1990s and opened a diplomatic representation in 2003. In 2006, the European Commission opened an EU diplomatic delegation to the Holy See and, in the following year, the delegation was given diplomatic attributions regarding the Order of Malta.

## Official representations of churches

A distinct entity is the ‘official representation of churches’. Churches have been represented both by pastoral bodies and by inter-church organizations. Although the Roman Catholic Church was in contact with European institutions through OCIPE, the European Catholic Centre, and other Catholic agencies in Brussels, only in 1980 did it establish an ‘official’ representation, the Commission of Bishops’ Conferences of the European Community (COMECE). COMECE is in direct contact with a large number of Catholic bodies and represents the official voice of the Roman Catholic Church to European institutions.

The first Protestant church to have an independent office was the Evangelical Church in Germany (*Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland*—EKD) in 1990.<sup>8</sup> The office has

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provided legal expertise to the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches and has represented the EKD to European institutions.

**Table 16.1** A selection of religious and convictional representations in dialogue with European institutions in Brussels.

Type of Representations	Title	Office in Brussels
Diplomatic representations	The Holy See	1970
Diplomatic representations	Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta (The Order of Malta)	2003
Official representations of churches	Commission of Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE)	1980
Official representations of churches	The Brussels Office of the Evangelical Church in Germany	1990
Official representations of churches	Church of England	2008
Official representations of churches	The Liaison Office of the Orthodox Church to the European Union (the Ecumenical Patriarchate)	1994
Official representations of churches	Representation of the Church of Greece to the European Union	1998
Official representations of churches	Representation of the Russian Orthodox Church to the European Institutions	2002
Official representations of churches	Representation of the Romanian Orthodox Church to the European Institutions	2007
Official representations of churches	Orthodox Church of Cyprus	2007
Inter-Religious or Convictional Organizations/Networks	The Conference of European Churches (which merged with the European Ecumenical Commission on Church and Society)	1999
Inter-Religious or Convictional Organizations/Networks	Quaker Council for European Affairs	1979
Inter-Religious or Convictional Organizations/Networks	Muslim Council for Cooperation in Europe	2003
Inter-Religious or Convictional Organizations/Networks	European Humanist Federation	1991
Inter-Religious or Convictional Organizations/Networks	European Jewish Congress	2009

Religious orders / Single issue organizations	Jesuit Refugee Service Europe	1991
Single-issue organizations	CEJI – A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe	1991
Single-issue organizations	Eurodiaconia	1996
Single-issue organizations	Caritas Europa	1971

*Note:* A number of these representations have offices in Strasbourg and other European cities.

After the Maastricht Treaty, a large number of churches followed a similar pattern. Although they were and remained part of inter-church structures, they gradually opened their own offices. In some cases, churches chose to be more visibly part of the structure of an inter-church organization by sending an officer to represent them (for example, representatives from Sweden and Finland working in the Conference of European Churches). Others decided to maintain contact with their previous inter-church partners while setting up offices of their own, such as the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople (1994), the Orthodox Church of Greece (1998), the Romanian and the Cypriot Orthodox Churches (2007), and the Church of England (2008).

### Inter-religious or convictional organizations/networks

Inter-religious or convictional organizations/networks have a large membership and represent confessions within a specific branch of a faith. From the beginning of the process of European integration, churches were grouped into organizations or networks which represented their interests. The WCC (1948) and the Conference of European Churches (1959) had informal contact with offices in Brussels. Some inter-religious networks separated from these organizations and established their own representations, such as the European Evangelical Alliance (1994) and the Pentecostal European Fellowship (2005).

A number of non-Christian and convictional communities set up offices in Brussels. The main distinction between this type of structure and the official representation of churches is membership. The confessional/convictional organizations/networks represent either a community within a larger confession (for example, B’nai B’rith Europe) or a group of confessional/convictional organizations (for example, the European Union of Jewish Students or the European Humanist Federation). A large number of organizations/networks were established before the European Coal and Steel Community but only became engaged in dialogue with European institutions after the Single European Act.

### Religious orders

Although the religious orders present at the European institutions are exclusively Catholic, they do not fit into the above categories due to their nature and operation. Their prime activity is pastoral, though some of them engage in advocacy work which is independent of the official policy of the Holy See. The Jesuit order has been the most active in monitoring the activities of European institutions, opening a religious office in Strasbourg in 1956 and in Brussels in 1963. A European office of the Jesuit Refugee Service was opened in 1990; the Dominican order established an association in 2001.



The majority of religious and convictional organizations represent single-issue groups, such as education, humanitarian aid, and advocacy. They operate either on an exclusive 'single' issue or work on a cluster at the same time. Single-issue organizations span all churches, religions, and communities of convictions and are actively engaged in EU policy areas. Most of them are in dialogue with European institutions either through diplomatic representation, official representation of churches, or inter-church or convictional organizations/networks. For example, the majority of Christian single-issue organizations maintain close relations with, and are represented by, the COMECE and the Conference of European Churches in their own dialogue with European institutions.

## Religion and public policy in the European Union

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An insight into the policy interests of religious and convictional communities is provided by the annual statements published in *European Issues* produced from 1950 until 1974 by the ECEC, the first transnational religious network in dialogue with European institutions. The analysis of topics showed that in the 1950s the main area under review was the rather broad topic of 'the meaning of Europe'. Finding a commonly agreed perception of what Europe was and the direction of the European project represented a key milestone for both religious and political leaders. The ECEC was interested in raising awareness among churches at the national level, and most statements were directed towards identifying the benefits and weaknesses of EC membership for EC Member States and prospective candidates. This type of policy engagement placed a considerable emphasis on national awareness rather than a systematic supranational dialogue and was influenced by divisions between East and West during the Cold War period. The process of identifying concrete policy areas in which churches could make a specific contribution remained underdeveloped in the 1950s and the 1960s. Topics such as youth and aid appeared sporadically. At its last meeting in Roehampton in 1974, the ECEC set up a transnational religious network on 'development issues', indicating the future avenue of joint work between Catholic and Protestant organizations.

A more visible engagement of churches with EC policy became evident in the 1970s and the 1980s when, in addition to 'development', churches raised concerns on the impact of intra-European 'migration' as a common area for churches and European institutions. In the 1990s and 2000s, President Delors' encouragement of dialogue between EU institutions and religious and convictional organizations led to greater professionalization of the sector. New policy areas were put forward as areas of interest for European institutions and religious/convictional bodies, including 'education', 'institutional and legal affairs', 'bioethics', 'advocacy', 'inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue', 'climate change', 'humanitarian aid', 'technology', and 'investment'. An analysis of meetings between religious/convictional organizations and the European Commission (Leustean, 2012) showed that three key terms have been common for 'religions, churches and communities of conviction', namely 'education', 'advocacy', and 'rights' (broadly defined, ranging from 'human rights' to 'social' and 'environmental rights').

An additional point is worth noting. Policy areas not only reflected the interests of a wide range of religious/convictional bodies anxious to assert their own agenda but, more importantly, they emerged from the deepening of the EU integration process itself. Topics such as 'Islam', 'political Islam' (Roy, 2004; Silvestri, 2009; Tibi, 2012), 'foreign policy', 'climate change', and 'financial reform' were novel for both religious representations and EU officials and demonstrated the growing range of issues which were linked with 'religion'.

The institutionalization of religious dialogue in 2009 was followed by meetings organized in a variety of ways: as working groups (bringing religious and convictional experts based either in Brussels or at the

national level together with EU officials working on specific issues); as dialogue meetings (seminars); and as annual meetings between the highest level of political and religious leadership in Europe (the Presidents of the European Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament and religious and convictional leaders).

## Religion and EU membership

At supranational level, predominantly Catholic countries have generally favoured the deepening of European integration process while Protestant countries were more sceptical. Predominantly Orthodox countries more or less fitted the Catholic model, but with an increasing number of religious leaders criticizing the EU approach to minorities (Nelsen, Guth, and Fraser, 2001). The tension between pro-integration and sceptical approaches has been evident throughout the history of the EU as demonstrated by the ways in which religious communities engaged with the idea of a united Europe. In the early stages of the European integration process, the European Community was criticized for becoming a 'fortress'. Religious communities were encouraged to alleviate this perception and to develop humanitarian programmes which would link European and non-European countries. This view gradually changed after the 2004 and 2007 EU enlargements to Central and East European countries in which religion played a significant role in shaping both national identity and political discourse. In 2004, at the time of referenda on EU membership taking place in East European countries, the European Commission held an unusually high number of meetings with Catholic clergy. The high number was evident due to the political influence of religious communities in these countries. In Poland, Cardinal Jozef Glemp, the highest religious authority in the country, went so far as to encourage people to vote for EU membership—adding, however, the rather ambiguous words, 'but only with God' (Leustean, 2012: 22).

Rather more equivocal was the dissatisfaction expressed in the corridors of power in Brussels towards the departure of the United Kingdom from the EU—a leave-taking which had a religious undertone. On 31 January 2020, the day when the United Kingdom officially left the EU, Donald Tusk, who, as President of the European Council oversaw negotiations during the Brexit debate, issued a short message to the British people: 'My dear British friends. We were, we are, and we will always be a Community. And no [B]rexit will ever change that' (Holden, Chalmers, and Lowe, 2020). The reference to 'Community' was poignant. As the political history of religious dialogue in the EU has shown, the founding fathers emphasized the vision of a united Europe as a 'Community', particularly because this term had both political and religious meanings. During the Brexit debate, public discourse in the UK was split between 'Leavers' and 'Remainers' with church commentators frequently approaching the departure with reference to theological reflections on marriage and divorce (Nixon, 2019). It seems, moreover, that marriage and divorce resonated rather more among the British public than 'Community'—a term intended to bring the people of Europe together. Tusk's words not only came too late, but failed to catch the imagination due, at least in part, to the inability of religious and political leaders to fully engage with this idea (Grebe and Worthen, 2019).

## Religion and the refugee crisis

After the post-2011 Syrian crisis and the 2014 Russian takeover of Crimea, the movement of forcibly displaced populations from eastern Ukraine, the Middle East, and North Africa posed a direct challenge to the EU. In August 2015, the EU's Migration Commissioner, Dimitros Avramopoulos, claimed that 'Europe is facing the worst refugee crisis since the Second World War' (Euronews, 2015) with hundreds of thousands of refugees arriving in the EU; over 2,600 died that year trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea. The response from religious communities was fragmented along national lines. In September 2015, Pope Francis issued a robust challenge: 'May every parish, every religious community, every monastery, every sanctuary in Europe host a family, starting with my diocese of Rome'. His words would have led to over 100,000 refugees immediately finding shelter in 27,000 Catholic parishes in Italy with many others following suit across Europe (Li, 2015).

p. 301 In May the following year, in a sign of inter-religious solidarity, Pope Francis, together with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the leading spiritual figure of the Eastern Orthodox world, and Archbishop Ieronymos II of Athens, visited the Moira refugee camps on the island of Lesbos. Inter-religious mobilization was visible across the continent. In Cologne, the Catholic Church used a refugee boat as an altar, while the Evangelical Church in Germany sent a ship to the Mediterranean Sea to rescue refugees. In Sweden, the Katarina Church and the Stockholm Mosque, two of the largest Christian and Muslim communities in the country, worked together to provide aid and accommodation to newly arrived Syrian refugees (Islamic Relief Worldwide, n.d.). Similarly, albeit on a smaller scale, the Muslim Council of Britain launched joint programmes with Christian organizations. Near the EU border, in Serbia, cooperation between Catholic and Orthodox humanitarian bodies provided direct aid to people stranded in reception centres (Leustean, 2019).

These examples have not been the norm across Europe. The EU decision to redistribute refugees among Member States was criticized in many East European Member States, particularly the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Bulgaria. Bulgaria stood out with the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church, the highest religious authority in the country, issuing a statement which not only denounced the European Union's migration policy but also presented the arrival of refugees as 'an invasion'. Metropolitan Hilarion Alfayev, head of the Department of External Church Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church, issued a similar statement encouraging the Orthodox churches of South-Eastern Europe to choose between traditional values promoted by Russia and European liberalism (Leustean, 2019). Fear of the 'other' and the perception that a distinction should be made between 'good' and 'bad' refugees which takes into account their religious identification characterized the ambivalent responses of many religious and political authorities (Mavelli and Wilson, 2017). Religious identification between different categories of refugees and migrants was evident when, after more general visa liberalization, Poland accepted nearly two million 'Christian' migrants from Ukraine while refusing to accept 'Muslims' from the Middle East (Trofimov, 2019).

## Religion and populism

The struggle of religious communities to support the concept of a united Europe has been equally evident in the rise of populism and right-wing nationalism with a direct impact on minorities of all kinds. Populist parties, both right and left, bring together populations expressing distrust of political elites, of growing immigration, and of a united Europe. Right-wing parties are largely unrelated to religious institutions; in their speeches, however, many political leaders employ a wide range of religious symbolism (Guth and Nelsen, 2019). In Italy, Matteo Salvini, leader of the right-wing Northern League (*Lega Nord*), has regularly advanced religious symbols at party rallies to the extent that an article in *Foreign Policy* presented his discourse as being ‘more Catholic than the pope’ (Momigliano, 2019). In Hungary, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán repeatedly condemned the arrival of refugees in his country deploying the concept of illiberal democracy which linked traditional values with the idea of ‘Christian liberty’. And in 2019, Archbishop of Kraków, Marek Jędraszewski, encouraged people to vote in national elections by endorsing the anti-LGBT+ campaign of the Law and Justice Party stating that a ‘rainbow plague’, similar to the ‘red plague’ of communism, was spreading throughout Europe (Scally, 2019).

p. 302 Populism—it should be noted—has not only affected European societies but has become a worldwide phenomenon with religious and political leaders regularly making references to religion, ranging from the United States to Russia and Brazil (Marzouki, McDonnell, and Roy, 2016). In the United States, Steve Bannon, a former advisor of President Donald Trump, has even put forward ‘Judaean-Christian’ reasons to support the advancement of exclusion, division, and the fear of the ‘other’ as a means of government in his country, thus supporting the fragmentation of the EU. One year later, during the COVID-19 pandemic spreading around the world, Pope Francis took an unprecedented public stance against populism and the lack of EU solidarity which could lead to the breakdown of the EU. In his *Urbi et Orbi* Easter message, he poignantly stated that ‘The European Union is presently facing an epochal challenge, on which will depend not only its future but that of the whole world [ ... ] The only alternative is the selfishness of particular interests and the temptation of a return to the past’ (Francis, 2020). The support for the disintegration of the EU among populist leaders has shown that religion can easily be manipulated for political reasons. Thus the misinterpretation—or misappropriation—of religion is likely to be one of the most significant challenges facing the European project in the years to come.

## Conclusion

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Religious communities have had a complex relationship with the EU. During the Cold War period, political tensions between the two blocs followed religious divisions. After the fall of communism, things were easier and a large number of religious and convictional communities opened offices in Brussels and engaged in dialogue with European institutions. More informal exchanges, however, have had a long history going back to the first days of the European project.

Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) introduced by the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon institutionalized a mechanism of religious dialogue with European institutions. It is unclear, however, if this should be perceived as ‘business as usual’ or simply an attempt to increase the visibility of the EU. The European External Action Service, the European Parliament, and the European Commission have organized meetings with religious bodies aiming to raise awareness of the role of religion in international affairs among both EU officials and the general public. However, finding the right way to engage with a wide variety of religious and convictional bodies which advance their own values remains a contested issue. Will the EU adopt a pan-European policy on religion which emphasizes the term ‘community’ and transcends national frameworks of religion–state relations? Will European institutions mobilize against the politicization of religion emerging from populist and right-wing nationalist

discourses? Or will 'religion' and 'religious divisions' be used to advance further the fragmentation of the European project? These are—and will remain—open questions.

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## Notes

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- 1     For the minutes of the 1990 and 1992 meetings see Leustean, 2012 and Hogebrink, 2015.
- 2     Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) introduced by the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon states that: ‘The Union respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States. The Union equally respects the status under national law of philosophical and non-confessional organisations. Recognising their identity and their specific contribution, the Union shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with these churches and organisations.’
- 3     Among the founders of the ECEC in 1950 were André Philip, the French Economic Minister (1946–7) and head of the French delegation to the European Economic Commission of the United Nations in 1947; Connie L. Patijn, the Dutch delegate to the United Nations Economic and Social Council; Max Kohnstamm, Counsellor in the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Gustav Heinemann, German Minister of Interior, member of Bundestag representing the CDU and President of the Synod of the Evangelical Church in Germany; Kenneth Grubb, Chairman of the Churches Commission of International Affairs office in London; Denis de Rougemont, a writer and leader of the cultural section of the European Movement; and Pierre Mahillon, a Belgian Magistrate.
- 4     The Consultative Committee of Churches in the European Communities was established by Protestant churches in the ECSC and the UK in 1964. It was renamed the Commission of Churches in the European Communities in 1972; the Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society in the European Communities in 1979; the European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society in 1985; and was integrated into the Conference of European Churches in 1999. An office was opened in Strasbourg in 1986.
- 5     The Ecumenical Centre in Brussels was registered as an Association internationale sans but lucratif in *Moniteur belge* no 2734 on 20 May 1965. The Board of the Ecumenical Centre was chaired by Helmut Freiherr von Verschuer, a high-ranking official who worked in the European Commission from 1958 until 1987. In 1966, the Centre employed the Reverend Marc Lenders as Secretary, a position he retained until 1999 (Leustean, 2014; Burton, 2015).
- 6     The Council of the Bishops’ Conferences of Europe had its headquarters in St Gallen, Switzerland, and some of its members entered into contact with European institutions, without opening an official representation in Brussels.
- 7     The initiative was set up in 1993 and ended in 2004.
- 8     The EKD has been one of the founding members and the largest financial contributor to the establishment of the ‘Consultative Commission of Churches in the European Communities’ in 1964. After the Merger Treaty, the EKD aimed to establish an independent office in 1969 but this was discouraged by the President of the European Commission who suggested that churches are better represented by an inter-church organization.

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CHAPTER

## 17 Religion and Law in the European Union

Norman Doe, Frank Cranmer

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### Abstract

All three major European supranational institutions—the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe (CoE), and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)—acknowledge the importance of religion within European history and culture and give special recognition to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. As has been argued elsewhere, the attitude of both the EU and the CoE to ‘religion’ is characterized by seven principles—the value of religion and of non-religion; subsidiarity; religious freedom; religious equality and non-discrimination; the autonomy of religious associations; cooperation with religion; and the special protection of religion by means of privileges and exemptions—principles that may be induced from their laws and other regulatory instruments. In doing so, they seek to maintain a balance between Europe’s religious, humanist, and cultural elements. How that balance and recognition operate in practice, however, is far from clear-cut and is highly sensitive to individual circumstances.

**Keywords:** [European Union](#), [Council of Europe](#), [religion](#), [law](#), [regulatory instruments](#), [cooperation with religion](#), [subsidiarity](#), [religious freedom](#), [religious equality](#)

**Subject:** [History of Religion](#), [Religion](#)

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THE three major European institutions—the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe (CoE), and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)—all acknowledge the importance of religion within European history and culture and their core documents give formal recognition to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. As has been argued elsewhere (Doe, 2011), the attitude of the EU and, for that matter, of the CoE to ‘religion’ is characterized by seven principles—the value of religion and of non-religion; subsidiarity; religious freedom; religious equality and non-discrimination; the autonomy of religious associations; cooperation with religion; and the special protection of religion by means of privileges and exemptions—principles that may be induced from their laws and other regulatory instruments. Ronan McCrea (2010) suggests that the EU seeks to maintain a balance between its religious, humanist, and cultural elements. How that balance and recognition operate in practice, however, is far from clear-cut and is highly sensitive to individual circumstances.

The same values are of equal importance to the CoE—of which all EU states are members—as to the EU. Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)—formally, the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms—guarantees ‘the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion’ subject only to ‘such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others’. Consequently, the values are asserted in the Recommendations and Resolutions of the ↪ Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE and in the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR): for example, the first case to be decided under Article 9 ECHR,<sup>1</sup> declared at paragraph 31 that religion was ‘one of the most vital elements that go to make up the identity of believers and their conception of life’ and pluralism ‘indissociable from a democratic society’. Article 10 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights 2012 (CFR) echoes the terms of Article 9 ECHR and its Preamble affirms ‘with due regard for the powers and tasks of the Union and for the principle of subsidiarity’ the rights resulting *from the ECHR*.

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As for the EU, its relationship with ‘religion’ in the wider sense has been a matter of debate at least since the early 1990s. In a speech to representatives of the European churches on 4 February 1992, Commission President Jacques Delors argued that the Union would not succeed solely on the basis of legal expertise or economic know-how:

If in the next ten years we haven’t managed to give a soul to Europe, to give a spirituality and meaning, the game will be up ... This is why I want to revive the intellectual and spiritual debate on Europe. I invite the Churches to participate actively in it. We don’t want to control it; it is a democratic discussion, not to be monopolised by technocrats ... We must find a way of involving the Churches.

(Krause, 2007: 1.1; Hogebrink, 2015: 16)

The issue re-emerged in 2002 when the EU Treaty was, in effect, being renegotiated within the European Convention chaired by Valéry Giscard d’Estaing. One of the burning issues in the discussions was the place of ‘religion’: in short, whether or not there was to be any mention of the religious heritage of the Union in the Preamble to what was to become the Treaty of Lisbon—more formally, the European Union Reform Treaty 2007 (EURT) (European Union, 2002 and 2007). Looking back in 2008, Valéry Giscard d’Estaing said that it had been ‘an important debate ... It was quite difficult to achieve, because words don’t have the same meaning everywhere’, pointing to the different connotations of *laïcité* in France, Italy, and the UK but stressing that Europe from the sixth to the eighteenth century was Christian: ‘It’s not a value judgment, it’s not saying it’s good or bad. It’s just how it is’ (Bribosia, 2008: 17). In the end, the issue was finessed by broadening its terms: the EURT as finally agreed (EURT 2007: C 306/1) inserted into the Preamble of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) as the second recital:

DRAWING INSPIRATION from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law.

(TEU 1992/2008: C115/15)

The institutional relationship between the EU and the ECHR is a complex one. What is now Article 6 of the TEU declares, *inter alia*, that ‘The Union shall accede to the [ECHR]’ ↪ while, for its part, the CoE reciprocated by adding a new paragraph (2) to Article 59 ECHR: ‘The European Union may accede to this Convention’. The EU’s accession was stalled, however, in 2014, when the Full Court of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) concluded that accession would be incompatible with EU law, primarily because, contrary to Article 6(2) TEU, it would adversely affect the characteristics and autonomy of Union law.<sup>2</sup>

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Whether corporate accession would make any great practical difference is, however, arguable. All current Members are also members of the CoE and, under Article 6.3 TEU, fundamental rights *as guaranteed by the ECHR* ‘shall constitute general principles of the Union’s law’, while the CFR reaffirms, *inter alia*, both the ECHR itself and the validity of the case law of Strasbourg. Accordingly, the CJEU takes careful note of the jurisprudence of Strasbourg: it has declared that the ECHR has special significance,<sup>3</sup> and has held that, where Charter rights correspond to those guaranteed by the ECHR, ‘their meaning and scope are to be the same as those in the ECHR’.<sup>4</sup> In what follows, therefore, it should be remembered that European law on religion must be understood both from the perspective of the EU and within the wider context of the ECHR.

## The value of religion

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The first of the principles of European religion law is the value of religion and, equally, of non-religious life-stances. As noted above, the Preamble to the EURT recognized that value, declaring that the EU draws inspiration ‘from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law’. Article 17 of the consolidated 2012 text of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), inserted by the EURT, recognizes the status under national law of churches, religious associations or communities, philosophical and non-confessional organizations and commits the Union to ‘an open, transparent and regular dialogue’ with them.

All the foregoing implies recognition of the value of religion *per se* and of the principle of subsidiarity—of which more below. However, it is not new: the Preamble to the CFR refers to Europe’s ‘spiritual and moral heritage’, while the Seventh Framework Programme directive, Council Decision (EC) 1982/2006, recognizes ‘religions’ (plural) as one ‘building element’ of European multicultural identity and heritage. Nor does the EURT specify *which* spiritual or religious heritage is inspirational; indeed, Article 22 CFR obliges the Union to respect ‘religious diversity’.

p. 310 Directive (EC) 2004/83, on minimum standards for the qualification and status of third-country nationals or stateless persons as refugees, adopts a studiously neutral approach to its understanding of religion, which includes holding theistic, non-theistic, and atheistic beliefs, participating in or abstaining from private or public worship, other religious acts or expressions of views, or personal or communal conduct based on or mandated by religious belief. That lack of obvious Christian bias is consistent with equality and non-discrimination. So, for example, under the regulation to establish a Community code on the movement of persons across borders—the Schengen Agreement—border guards must ‘fully respect’ human dignity irrespective of religion or belief. In contrast, however, the Common Position adopted in 2005 on dealing with prevention, management and resolution of conflict in Africa also recognizes the dangers posed by ‘the radicalisation of religious groups’.

## Subsidiarity in religious matters

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The principle of subsidiarity first emerged in the Preamble to the Treaty on European Union (TEU) as signed in Maastricht in 1992, under which the parties ‘RESOLVED to continue the process of creating an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe, in which decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity’ (TEU 1992/2008: C115/16).

Under it, the Union will not intervene in areas outside its exclusive competence unless the objectives of a proposed action cannot be adequately achieved by the individual Member States. The regulation of religion

is not expressly listed among the competences of the EU, though subjects associated with religion, such as culture and education, are listed explicitly in, for example, Article 6 TFEU.

The principle is affirmed by the TFEU, while the Preamble to the CFR mentions ‘due regard for ... the principle of subsidiarity’; both recognize the right of States to determine the legal position of domestic religious organizations over a wide range of issues. So, for example, the Union respects the special constitutional status of Mount Athos for ‘spiritual and religious’ reasons; the CJEU has held that religious factors may be an important element in national decision-making on the regulation of gambling; and religious and ethical issues about abortion have been held to be irrelevant in determining the legality of restrictions on student associations providing information about abortion services. In 1996, the CJEU rejected the UK’s attempt to have Directive (EC) 2003/88—the working time directive—annulled but, in doing so, it also rejected the Commission’s attempt to make Sunday the Europe-wide day of rest. In 2018, the CJEU held that for the Flemish Regional Government to require that ritual slaughter without pre-stunning be carried out only in an approved slaughterhouse did not infringe religious freedom.<sup>5</sup>

p. 311 Nevertheless, matters within the Union’s economic competence may have a religious dimension. For example, under Directive (EEC) 92/456, Annex 1 on public works procurement rules, the domestic procedures adapted to the relevant EU law that national authorities must apply include, in the case of Belgium, church councils, while the provisions under Regulation (EEC) 3911/92 on the export of cultural goods include elements which form an integral part of religious monuments.

Furthermore, how a third country treats religion may be of direct interest to the EU in its relations with that State. The most recent version of the Accession Partnership with Turkey, in Council Decision 2008/157/EC [2008] OJ L 51/4, 3.1, requires that Turkey guarantee in law and in practice the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by all individuals, without discrimination—irrespective, inter alia, of religion or belief—and ‘comply with the ECHR, and ensure full execution of the judgments’ of the ECtHR. It also requires Turkey to take the necessary measures to establish an atmosphere of tolerance conducive to the full respect of freedom of religion in practice and sets out in considerable detail how it should do so. Though the Turkish example would seem to be a qualification to the principle of subsidiarity, it assumes that *subsidiarity cannot extend to unlawful discrimination on whatever grounds*.

McCrea, echoing Delors, has suggested that the weakness of the EU’s identity means that it ‘lacks the authority to effect fundamental change in the relationship between religion, law, and the state in Europe’ (2010: 3). And perhaps, because the Union is divided between a historically Protestant North and a historically Roman Catholic South—with an increasingly large population who adhere to other religions or to none—the Convention chaired by Giscard d’Estaing concluded that for the EU *as an institution* to attempt to formulate an overall statement on religion was simply a bridge too far. Moreover, Grace Davie (2002: 11) has noted a traditional North–South divide in religious observance in Europe—except for Poland and the two jurisdictions in Ireland, all of which she would regard as special cases. Data from the 2009 European Values Survey on the proportions of those who *never* attend a religious service would largely support that view.

That said, subsidiarity means that national religious affairs are primarily the concern of the Member States without EU intervention and that the Union respects the status of religious organizations under national laws. It may, however, decide on matters falling within its competence even if they have indirect religious implications for Member States.

## Religious freedom

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p. 312 The CJEU has declared that ‘the Community legal order undeniably strives to ensure respect for human dignity as a general principle of law’.<sup>6</sup> In so doing, the EU recognizes ↴ the rights, freedoms, and principles set out in Article 10 CFR, which, says Article 6.1, has ‘the same legal value as the Treaties’ (and is consolidated with them). The CJEU’s early jurisprudence took that as a feature of Community polity, along with many other rights that potentially concern religion, even though it was not in the Rome or Maastricht treaties. For example, the Court has held that, though the law on community officials forbade religious discrimination, scheduling an examination on a Friday did not breach the freedom of religion of a Jewish candidate.<sup>7</sup> The principle is also embedded in the Preamble to the Equal Treatment Directive (EC) 2004/113: ‘it is important to respect other fundamental rights and freedoms, including ... the freedom of religion’. Other rules are prohibitive: for example, under Decision (EC) 2004/676 Article 36, staff appointments to the European Defence Agency must not refer to the religious beliefs of candidates.

The principle is particularly evident in the administration of justice. A Member State has no duty to extradite if that State has substantial grounds to believe that the request has been made to prosecute or punish a person on religious grounds or would prejudice the position of that person for religious reasons. The framework decision (EC) 2005/214 on the mutual recognition of financial penalties allows a Member State to refuse to execute a decision or financial penalty if it believes—objectively—that the aim is to punish a person on grounds of religion. Similar considerations apply in the framework decision (EC) 2006/783 on the mutual recognition of confiscation orders. Similar rules exist when a Member State refuses transit of third-country nationals or stateless persons if they run the risk of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the death penalty—which is in any case forbidden in all EU Member States by Protocol 13 to the ECHR—or persecution because of religion (but not persecution on grounds of belief).

As the European Council pointed out during the Danish presidency in June 1993, the basic prerequisite for EU membership is respect for democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the protection of minorities. In addition, the EU commonly makes religious freedom or equality a condition in its policies on external relations with non-Member States—as in its Common Position on Nigeria, 2002/401. Article 2.1(b)(iii) of Regulation (EC) 1889/2006, to establish a financing instrument for democracy and human rights worldwide, enables Community assistance in the fight against discrimination based on religion or belief. Strasbourg jurisprudence is also important in that regard, while religious freedom is a well-developed element of the constitutional traditions common to the countries of Europe. The CJEU has emphasized that fundamental rights form an integral part of the law and that, in safeguarding those rights, the Court ‘has to look to the constitutional traditions common to the Member States, so that measures which are incompatible with the fundamental rights recognised by the Community may not find acceptance in the Community’.<sup>8</sup>

## Religious equality and discrimination

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Article 21 CFR prohibits ‘Any discrimination based on any ground’, including ‘religion or belief, political or other opinion’ in accordance with Article 13 of the Treaty of Rome, which declares that ‘the Council, acting ... on a proposal from the Commission and after consulting the European Parliament, may take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation’. The Court has therefore declared non-discrimination to be a fundamental principle of EU law.<sup>9</sup>

The prohibition against religious discrimination appears in a multitude of EU regulatory instruments, such as Decision (EC) 2002/621 on the recruitment of Union personnel and Decision (EC) 2004/676 on staff of the



European Defence Agency. Under Directives (EC) 2005/71 and 2004/114, Member States must admit third-country nationals for the purpose of scientific research and for study, pupil exchanges, unremunerated work, and voluntary service without discrimination on grounds of religion or belief. Equally, under the terms of the Corrigendum to Directive (EC) 2004/58, Preamble (32), EU citizens and their families may move and reside freely within the Union without discrimination on account of religion or belief. Under Regulation (EC) 1905/2006, health care for lower-income and marginalized groups must include ‘persons belonging to groups suffering religious discrimination’. Similarly, access to the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, and the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund must not discriminate on grounds of religion or belief.

The ECHR’s bar on religious discrimination is similar in breadth to that developed in EU law: Article 14 secures rights under the Convention ‘without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status’.

Conversely, both the ECtHR and the CJEU have been equivocal over the issue of religious dress. For example, the Strasbourg Grand Chamber upheld the French ban on the Islamic face-veil, partly on the ground that France had a wide margin of appreciation in the matter and partly because, in its view, wearing the *niqab* offended against the principle of ‘living together’ (*vivre ensemble*).<sup>10</sup> In two judgments handed down on the same day,<sup>11</sup> the Grand Chamber of the CJEU came to somewhat ambivalent conclusions. In *Achbita*, it ruled that Article 2(2)(a) of Directive 2000/78—the equal treatment directive—had to be interpreted as meaning that an internal rule of a private undertaking prohibiting the visible wearing of *any* political, philosophical, or religious sign ↵ in the workplace, including the *niqab*, was not *direct* discrimination based on religion or belief. It might, however, constitute *indirect* discrimination under Article 2(2)(b) if it put persons adhering to a particular religion or belief at a particular disadvantage, unless it was objectively justified by a legitimate aim, such a policy of political, philosophical and religious neutrality in relation to customers, and the means of achieving that aim were appropriate and necessary. In *Bouagnaoui*, however, where the request that the claimant should not wear her *hijab* had come from one of her employer’s customers rather than from the employer itself, the Grand Chamber ruled that Article 4(1) had to be interpreted as meaning that the willingness of an employer to take account of the wishes of a customer no longer to have its services provided by a worker wearing a *hijab* could not be considered a genuine and determining occupational requirement within the meaning of the Article.

## The autonomy of religious associations

Neither the Treaty of Rome nor the Maastricht Treaty provides for the autonomy of religious organizations; however, the Treaty of Lisbon amends the Treaty on European Union to provide that ‘the Union shall aim to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation’ (Article 10, TFEU)—and it is certainly a necessary aspect of religious freedom. In any event, it has been assumed in many other instruments. For instance, under the Accession Partnership decision, Council Decision (EC) 2006/35, Turkey must establish conditions for the functioning of religious communities, inter alia, through their legal personality, their members and assets, teaching, appointment and training of clergy, and enjoyment of property rights in line with Protocol 1 ECHR.

Importantly, the Union sometimes explicitly allows for the operation of religious duties, as Advocate General Eleanor Sharpston has noted.<sup>12</sup> Under the Council Common Position 2007/140, Member States could grant exemptions from the restrictive measures against Iraq (introduced for security reasons) to prevent the entry or transit through their territories of proscribed persons where the travel was justified by ‘urgent



humanitarian need, including religious obligation'. In a judgment about French restrictions on the financial freedom of the Church of Scientology, the CJEU did not address religious autonomy but did strike down the law in question on grounds of imprecision and breach of legal certainty.<sup>13</sup>

p. 315 Perhaps the most well-known juridical expression of the autonomy principle is the freedom of religious organizations to discriminate on grounds of religion in employment. Directive (EC) 93/104—the working time directive—allows derogations from prescribed requirements for workers officiating in religious ceremonies provided there is proper regard for health and safety, while the Directive (EC) 2000/78 prohibits direct and indirect discrimination on grounds of religion or belief. However, Article 4(2) of Directive (EC) 2000/78 permits religious discrimination for 'occupational activities within churches and other public or private organisations the ethos of which is based on religion or belief' where the nature or context of those activities means that religion or belief is 'a genuine, legitimate and justified occupational requirement, having regard to the organisation's ethos' and goes on to declare that it shall not prejudice 'the right of churches and other public or private organisations, the ethos of which is based on religion or belief, acting in conformity with national constitutions and laws, to require individuals working for them to act in good faith and with loyalty to the organisation's ethos'. That said, however, the CJEU has ruled that, where a religious organization imposes a religious requirement for employment, that requirement must be *genuine*.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, it has ruled that remarriage after divorce without a prior annulment was not a genuine and justifiable reason for dismissing a head of department of a Roman Catholic hospital because it did not appear to be necessary for the promotion of the hospital's ethos—and similar positions in the hospital were held by non-Catholics who were not subject to the same discipline.<sup>15</sup>

An important by-product of religious autonomy is the integration of decision-making by a religious authority into the EU regime which assigns it public EU functions. So, for example, Directive (EC) 2001/88, on minimum standards for the protection of pigs, refers in the Preamble to the obligation on Member States to respect 'religious rites [and] cultural traditions'. Article 5.2 of Directive (EC) 93/119, on the protection of animals at the time of slaughter, exempts from the requirement for pre-stunning 'particular methods of slaughter required by certain religious rites', while, under Article 2, 'the religious authority on whose behalf slaughter is carried out shall be competent for the application and monitoring of the special provisions which apply to slaughter according to religious rites'. Nevertheless, in 2020<sup>16</sup> the Court upheld a decree of the Flemish Regional Government prohibiting animals from being slaughtered without prior stunning, *including in cases of slaughter prescribed by a religious community*. Previously, it had ruled that the EU organic production logo cannot be displayed on products derived from animals slaughtered without pre-stunning because 'such a practice fails to observe the highest animal welfare standards'.<sup>17</sup>

p. 316 Under Regulation (EC) 1347/2000, the EU recognizes decisions of church tribunals in matrimonial causes operative under concordats between the Holy See and Portugal, Spain, and Italy in determining marital status. Regulation (EEC) 3201/90, on the description of wines, allows wine to be described as acceptable for religious use if it has been produced 'in accordance with the special rules laid down by the religious authorities concerned, and those authorities have given their written approval as to such indication'.

Similarly, though processing personal data about religious or philosophical beliefs is prohibited, there are exceptions for processing carried out by foundations, associations, or other non-profit-making bodies with a religious or philosophical aim in the course of their legitimate activities, provided the procession relates solely to members or persons having regular contact with them and the data subject consents. That said, however, though the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 'respects and does not prejudice the status under existing constitutional law of churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States, as recognised in Article 17 TFEU', that by no means confers *carte blanche*. At the request of the Supreme Administrative Court of Finland, the CJEU ruled in an advisory opinion that the collection of data by the Jehovah's Witnesses during their door-to-door preaching about visits to persons unknown to

themselves or to the local congregation was not covered by the exceptions laid down by EU law on the protection of personal data.<sup>18</sup>

## Cooperation with religion

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The sixth principle is cooperation with religion. Article 17.3 TFEU provides that ‘the Union shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with ... churches and organisations’. The database of Consultation, the European Commission and Civil Society (CONECCS), which carries information about formal consultative bodies and civil society organizations, lists a long series of religious organizations, such as the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches, the European Humanist Federation, the *Centre Européen Juif d’Information*, and the Quaker Council for European Affairs. The Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant churches, the Orthodox churches, the Quakers, and the Jewish and Muslim faiths all have full-time representation in Brussels.

p. 317 Cooperation may be justified on the basis of the particular expertise of religious bodies in, for example, moral and social affairs—but it may also represent a pragmatic response to the fact that religions have simply refused to accept being marginalized by ↵ the separation of the State from religion. The Roman Catholic Church, for example, commonly pronounces on matters of public concern; and in an address to members of the European People’s Party, Pope Benedict XVI said that the principal focus of the Church’s public interventions was the protection and promotion of the dignity of the person and to draw particular attention to principles that were not negotiable: the protection of life at all its stages, the family and marriage, and the right of parents to educate their children (Ratzinger, 2006).

Moreover, the principle merely articulates existing EU practices and procedures: Decision (EC) 2006/971 on Specific Programme Cooperation, for example, accepts that ‘appreciation and understanding of differences between value systems of different religions or ethnic minority groups lay foundations for positive attitudes’. Under the terms of Community Regulation (EC) 168/2007, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights must cooperate closely with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) combating racism and xenophobia at national, European, and international levels and one of its functions is to establish a ‘cooperation network’ (the Fundamental Freedoms Platform) to include ‘religious, philosophical and non-confessional organisations’. Cooperation is also a feature of EU external relations; a recent comprehensive overview argues that faith-based organizations ‘are playing a pivotal role in a number of new fields, including climate change, development, and conflict resolution, and the EU is taking them increasingly into account’ (Perchoc, 2017: 1).

That principle extends also to financial support for religion which, under Regulation (EC) 113/2002, is included in the classification of non-profit institutions for the purposes of expenditure. Churches and religious associations and communities are eligible for funding in relation to a range of issues: development cooperation, nuclear safety cooperation, joint cross-border cooperation under the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument and, under Regulation (EC) 1717/2006 Article 10(2), promoting ‘Stability Abroad’.

The Lisbon Treaty obligation to cooperate in dialogue with religions that became Article 17.3 TFEU goes beyond the constitutional laws of Member States—and, indeed, beyond the reach of the EU; the Council of Europe’s White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, *Living Together as Equals in Dignity* (Council of Europe, 2008) gave rise to an annual dialogue, of which the 2017 session was the tenth in the series.

National constitutions do not explicitly impose *duties* to engage in dialogue and cooperate with religions, but under them States may have a *right* to do so—and concordats and other agreements on church–state relations have proliferated within national borders. Moreover, national laws facilitate cooperation on a host

of matters of common concern, ranging from acquiring legal personality and non-interference by the State in the internal affairs of religious organizations to chaplaincy in hospitals, prisons, and the armed forces. Dialogue with religious organizations by the Union and the Council of Europe in policy making and recognition of their importance in civil society simply reflect a basic principle of religion law common to the Member States of the two institutions.

## The special protection of religion

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The special protection of religion by means of privileges and exemptions is more prevalent in EU functional instruments than its treaties. However, Article 10.2 of the CFR recognizes ‘The right of conscientious objection ... in accordance with the national laws governing the exercise of this right’, while Article 14.3 guarantees ‘the right of parents to ensure the education and teaching of their children in conformity with their religious, philosophical and pedagogical convictions’. That position is by no means uncontroversial; Jürgen Habermas, for example, argues that justifying laws or policy on religious grounds is inconsistent with a liberal constitutional order (2006: 4). As with religious autonomy, special protection seems to be a micro-principle of religious freedom: people cannot practise their religions freely if rules of general applicability disadvantage them in particular ways because of their religious needs.

The concept of special protection is based on EU practice in various fields. First, special protection may be afforded to religious *associations*. Under Directive (EEC) 89/104, Article 3(2)(b), for example, a Member State may provide that a trade mark shall not be registered where it covers ‘a sign of high symbolic value, in particular a religious symbol’, while Directive (EC) 2000/31, Article 3(4)(a) bans advertisements in any broadcast of a religious service. Secondly, special protection may be afforded to *individuals*—so Directive (EC) 2000/31, Art 3(4)(a) provides that Member States may derogate from the terms of the directive on electronic commerce in order to combat any incitement to hatred on grounds of religion. Thirdly, special protection may apply to religious *property*. Regulation (EEC) 3911/92, Annex, Article 1.2, for example, makes provision about the export of cultural goods forming an integral part of religious monuments while, under Directive (EEC) 93/7, the return of cultural objects unlawfully removed from a Member State includes objects found in ecclesiastical inventories. Fourthly, special protection is extended to *food*—we have already noted the exemption from pre-stunning of animals accorded to religious slaughterers. Under Regulation (EC) 1829/2003, an applicant for authorization to trade in genetically modified food or feed must submit ‘a reasoned statement that the food does not give rise to ethical or religious concerns’ and the product label must state whether the modification gives rise to such concerns. Similarly, under the terms of Regulation (EC) 2000/2005, export refunds on beef and veal should be granted for third countries which, ‘for cultural or religious reasons, traditionally import substantial numbers of animals for domestic slaughter’.

A related practice is the conferral of special religious privileges, though this has not been articulated formally in EU foundational instruments. Special privileges or exemptions for religion have long been a feature of national laws on a wide range of matters; and McCrea (2010: 164) suggests that, in relation to discrimination, ‘EU law recognizes religion as an exceptional phenomenon whose communal rights and public role are entitled to broad recognition not accorded to other kinds of bodies’.

p. 319 EU law commonly exempts religion from prescribed requirements. Under Directive (EC) 2001/85, ‘mobile churches’ enjoy exemptions from the requirements of vehicle harmonization, while under Directive (EEC) 77/388, tax exemptions may allowed for ‘supplies of staff by religious or philosophical institutions for medical, welfare, child protection and educational purposes with a view to spiritual welfare’.

By way of contrast, Council Decision (EC) 2006/35 on the Turkey Accession Partnership requires at Annex 3.1 that Turkey adopt a law ‘comprehensively addressing all the difficulties faced by non-Muslim religious minorities and communities in line with the relevant European standards’ and suspend all sales or

confiscation of properties belonging to non-Muslim religious communities, implement ‘the exercise of freedom of thought, conscience and religion by all individuals and religious communities in line with the European Convention on Human Rights and taking into account the relevant recommendations of the Council of Europe’s Commission against Racism and Intolerance’, and establish conditions for the functioning of all religious communities, including their legal and judicial protection.

Such privileges, however, are at the discretion of Member States. Under Article 17(1)(c) of Directive (EC) 2003/88—the working time directive—exceptions to working time requirements may be made for religious officiants. Article 2(2) of Directive (EEC)—the directive on equal treatment of men and women in employment—allows Member States to exclude from its application occupations for which the sex of the worker constitutes a determining factor by reason of their nature or the context in which they are carried out. So, for example, Articles 5(3)(c) and (g) of Directive (EC) 2001/29, on harmonization of copyright, allow Member States to make exceptions for material on ‘religious topics’ and for ‘use in religious celebrations’, while Article 18 of Regulation (EC) 1781/2006 allows them to exempt payment service providers from requirements about providing information on the payer accompanying transfers of funds to organizations carrying out non-profit religious purposes, provided that such organizations are subject to external reporting and audit.

## Conclusion

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Both EU law and the ECHR through the jurisprudence of the ECtHR recognize a wide range of religious phenomena—religious associations, groups, authorities, leaders, rules, customs, obligations, beliefs, teaching, ceremonies, rites, worship, observance, practice, and education—and the evidence suggests that the EU shares characteristics most in common with the so-called cooperationist model of religion–state relations, though the language of separation is also employed. The EU is neither a state–church system nor an exclusively secular institution; rather, it recognizes the value of religion in the life of Europe.

p. 320 The Union’s Charter of Fundamental Rights provides a convenient presentation and summary of the seven principles. Though they have not been articulated *de novo* by the EU in its recent reforms, they may be found in a host of pre-existing legal instruments of the EU. Some of them, of course, are also to be found in the ECHR and the jurisprudence of Strasbourg and it is clear that the ECHR has had an enormous influence on EU religion law.

The implementation of EU religion law by the Member States, notably on data protection and non-discrimination, has produced a degree of national juridical uniformity; equally, however, national religion laws mirror the EU principles. This has occurred without any identifiable influence on the part of the EU (or indeed of the CoE). Any influence on their development may be justified on the basis that the ‘general principles of law common to the Member States’ are, according to the EU, a material or inspirational source for its own law. The principles induced from national religion laws may also serve to measure the legitimacy of future developments in EU law on religion, and perhaps to help promote the idea that treaty/charter rights are to be interpreted in harmony with the common constitutional traditions of Member States.

Finally, the likely effect on domestic human rights of the UK’s departure from the EU is a matter of some dispute. The Joint Committee on Human Rights argues in its report, *Legislative Scrutiny: The EU (Withdrawal) Bill: A Right by Right Analysis* (Joint Committee on Human Rights, 2018), that the exclusion of the CFR from domestic law and the retention of underlying ‘fundamental rights and principles’ may, on Brexit, result in ‘an uncertain human rights landscape’: the Committee’s overall conclusions are summarized at paragraph 5. On the other hand, however, the CFR has no direct impact on national human rights guarantees because Article 6(1)(2) TEU declares that the Charter ‘shall not extend in any way the competences of the Union as defined in the Treaties’, while Article 52(3) CFR confirms that position:

In so far as this Charter contains rights which correspond to rights guaranteed by the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the meaning and scope of those rights shall be the same as those laid down by the said Convention. This provision shall not prevent Union law providing more extensive protection.

Since the UK remains a signatory to the ECHR notwithstanding its withdrawal from the EU, it remains bound by its terms. Moreover, the CFR applies only to situations in which public bodies make decisions *within the purview of EU law*; under section 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998 and section 24 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, however, public bodies in the UK are bound by the provisions of the ECHR *when making decisions generally*.

The impact of Brexit on the human rights landscape of the UK may not, however, be so great as the Joint Committee predicts, because the practical protections offered to human rights overall—and to the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion in particular—are in any case probably greater under the ECHR than under the CFR. ↪ Whether the UK will at some point in the future seek to renege from the ECHR and leave the jurisdiction of the Court remains a matter of mere speculation.

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# Notes

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\*   Much of the basic material in this chapter and, in particular, the concept of the ‘seven principles’ was first proposed in Norman Doe, ‘Towards a “Common Law” on Religion in the European Union’, in Lucian N. Leustean and John T. S. Madeley (eds.), *Religion, Politics and Law in the European Union* (London: Routledge, 2009). It was developed further in chapter 10 of Norman Doe, *Law and Religion in Europe: A Comparative Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). The present discussion supplements and updates that work.

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- 2   [2014] EUECJ Avis-2/13 at 258.
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### CHAPTER

## 18 Religion and the European Parliament

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### Abstract

This chapter discusses the salience, relevance, and effects of religion at the European Parliament (EP) across a range of issues. These are: the allocation of power (religion and European elections); the profile of political elites (members of the EP and religion); the structuring of political forces (religion and party politics, using the example of Christian democracy); and religion and public policy (with cases studies of identity politics and counter-radicalization). The chapter concludes that, when dealing with religion, the EP mirrors what happens in European societies more generally in terms of the secularization and culturalization of faith. The EP also duplicates a frequently found feature of EU policy making: that is, to hollow out the normative and controversial content from religion and to address the topic through the repertoire of human rights, while respecting the national diversity of Member States.

**Keywords:** European Parliament, EU, European elections, religion, Christian democracy, counter-radicalization, identity politics, secularization, culturalization

**Subject:** History of Religion, Religion

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AS a representative body elected by direct universal suffrage since 1979, the European Parliament (EP) is the democratic bond of the European Union (EU). In the political culture of Europe since the Enlightenment, a parliament has embodied popular sovereignty, constituting the bedrock of the legitimacy of political orders; it exists to make the voices of citizens heard. The EP benefits from these expectations. Opinion polls show that it is the most well-known and well-liked of all EU institutions, even if Europeans do not necessarily feel themselves to be represented through its functioning. The EP is also the most political arena of the EU and as such offers the best opportunity for the expression of normative views, including religious ones. Proportional representation enables minority forces to gain visibility and resources. Consequently, it is likely to offer a relatively comprehensive reflection of Europe's ideological, cultural and denominational diversity.

Nevertheless, the EP must submit to the usual constraints of EU politics. The necessity to seek large coalitions and to make compromises leads to the avoidance of controversial issues, especially religiously



loaded ones. Deference to Member States, the delegation to experts and civil society, a focus on means rather than ends, and a predilection for the legal and technocratic repertoires of action are some of the features displayed by the assembly when handling debates in which values are at stake. In addition, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) face the inevitable ambiguity of speaking for Europe while representing national electorates. National cultures, majority denominations, and the history of state–church relations remain formative with respect to religion and the acknowledgment of contributions of faith communities to the public good. Political groups at the EP comply with this diversity.

p. 324 The purpose of this chapter is to offer an overview of the salience, relevance and effects of religion in the EP. Several issues are analysed: the allocation of power (religion and European elections); the profile of political elites (MEPs and religion); the structuring of political forces (religion and party politics, using the example of ↵ Christian democracy); and election and public policy (using case studies of identity politics and counter–radicalization). The chapter is organized as follows. The first section describes the influence of religion in the election of European legislators. In a secularizing Europe, religion is less salient at the individual level, as an ideological matrix in party competition and as an organizing force in government. Rather religion appears as a secondary and indirect, but nonetheless resilient, influence in European elections. The second section documents the way that MEPs relate to religion by summarizing key findings from the first–ever survey on what MEPs believe and what they do with these beliefs. In a nutshell, European representatives roughly reflect the characteristics of their electorates with some specificities linked to their duties as policy makers. They constitute a secularized elite relatively distant from religion, but not a secularist group showing hostility to it. They come to terms, however reluctantly, with the necessity to deal with religion as a governance issue. The third section analyses the role of religion in party politics by focusing on the case of Christian democracy, historically a driving force in European politics but currently facing decline and fragmentation. The European People’s Party is the heir to this heritage and its avatars are evidence of the shifting importance and meanings of spiritual values in EU affairs.

Finally, the fourth section deals with religion as an object or a component of public policy. Considering its competencies and resources, the EP has little to do with religion in this regard but confronts the issue in different capacities. A first example can be found in interactions with religious organizations and civil society: that is, in dialogue with communities of faith and convictions, either in forms organized by the treaties or through political forums and the entrepreneurship of actors promoting values or causes. Further illustrations include the visits of religious leaders who are instrumental in promoting the international profile of the assembly, and in symbolic politics such as prizes granted to religious actors. A second example occurs when the EP must rule on religious or religiously loaded issues, normally in an indirect way. According to Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the EU respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States. Two illustrations will suffice: religion and identity politics—for instance, the debate about the Christian heritage of Europe and the reference to religious values; and religion and security—for instance, the role of the EP in the EU counter–terrorism and counter–radicalization strategy.

## Religion and European elections: a declining, indirect, but resilient influence

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The first effects of religion on the EP comes through its ability to frame attitudes to Europe as a whole and to voting in European elections. Concerning the attitudes of ↴ citizens towards European integration, the impact of religion is both declining at the scale of the continent and different in each national context. It is one secondary factor among and in interaction with many others (feelings about economic conditions, trust in government, feeling of a European identity, etc.). Besides, religion must be broken down into several variables. The first is denomination. Protestants are more likely to be Eurosceptic than Catholics (Scheuer and van der Brug, 2007: 94–115). The second variable is religiosity, understood as the intensity of belief and observance. Some studies show that a higher level of religious commitment reinforces support for European integration (Nelsen, Guth, and Fraser, 2001: 191–217), while others do not highlight such a phenomenon (Hobolt *et al.*, 2011: 359–79). A third variable is religious intolerance. The rejection of other faiths is a strong predictor of Euroscepticism.

Shifting from attitudes to behaviour, the influence of religion on voting is not clear due to a lack of data and of longitudinal studies since the introduction of universal suffrage for European elections. That said, scholarship suggests a steady decline in the impact of religion on party choice in European elections (van der Brug, Hobolt, and de Vreese, 2009: 1266–83), due largely to generational replacement and increasing secularization. However, the situation is different from one society to another. The higher the degree of religious pluralism, the more religion can be expected to interfere in party choice. However, despite its decline, religion still does more to structure the vote in European elections than either social class or attitudes towards the EU. In the same way, religion continues to discriminate between parties. Religiosity has a positive effect on voting for conservative and Christian democrat parties with no specific advantage for the latter despite their spiritual heritage; it is less important for liberal and Eurosceptic parties, and less still for the Greens, far-right or leftist parties (Scheuer and van der Brug, 2007: 94–115).

Against this sociological background, religion takes, unsurprisingly, a tiny place in party manifestos for European elections. Secularization, denominational diversity, and differences between national ways to combine political and spiritual affairs make difficult any pan-European mobilization appealing to religion.

## Religion and MEPs as a political elite

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The analysis of the way MEPs relate to religion draws on the research project ReLEP ‘Religion at the European Parliament’ which aimed to study what European representatives believe and what they do with these beliefs. The survey was based on aggregated answers of the 167 MEPs who took the questionnaire during the term 2009–14. Case studies were also developed to discuss the results by country and compare MEPs with national political elites (Foret, 2014).

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According to ReLEP findings, MEPs present a profile of ‘cultural Christians’ largely comparable to that of the citizens they represent. A large majority claims a religious belonging, fewer identify as religious persons, and an even smaller number as believers. ↴ The influence of their status as representatives could explain both claims to have a religious identity out of concern not to hurt the feelings of religious parts of the electorate, but also—in some cases—an outspoken atheism to assert a distinctive political identity.

MEPs testify that religion has effects on the functioning of the EP. Interestingly, MEPs give more importance to it at the global level of the institution and for their counterparts rather than themselves. Bluntly stated, religion matters mainly for others. This is congruent with the growing individualization in the way that MEPs relate to faith. Religious affairs are considered as either too present or absent at the EP

depending on the personal religiosity of a given politician. The MEP who is atheist or simply indifferent to religion postulates that colleagues that are believers are driven by their faith. The mildly religious representatives express surprise towards what they perceive as an 'obsession' of their secular counterparts who see the influence of religious determinations and lobbies everywhere. Very few MEPs define themselves as primarily inspired by religion. The effects of religion are rather conservative: it confirms existing belongings based on nationality, political groups, and denomination. MEPs are confronted with greater spiritual diversity in Brussels and Strasbourg than in their national political life, but, at the same time, they do not alter their views on religion. There is no massive resocialization under the pressure of European policy making, but there may be adaptation to a new context and to new ways of formulating religious claims and references. Individually, MEPs say that they do not take religion into account very frequently. They tackle it mostly as a policy issue, secondly as a source of personal inspiration, and thirdly through interest representation. Most often, then, religion arises not as a result of choice but because it is there and must be dealt with. ReLEP data do not confirm the assumption that the EP is besieged by religious lobbies. MEPs say that their contacts with religious interest groups are limited to a few times a year or a term; that is, less frequently than similar contacts at the level of national or regional Parliaments. The structure of religious lobbying (who speaks with whom) reflects the strength of national and denominational channels and issue networks. For instance, A German Catholic MEP working on humanitarian aid or social policy is likely to interact with German religious NGOs and charities.

Religion does not arise much as a specific policy issue and MEPs do not support the idea of a fully fledged religious policy for the EU. It emerges mostly in connection with questions of fundamental rights, culture, and social issues. In short, both as an influence and an object of public action, religion is mediated by other matters. However, religion has a clear role as a constitutive element of identity. MEPs are almost equally divided on whether there should be a reference to the Christian heritage of Europe in the treaties. They also consider that religion has an impact on the relationships of the EU with the rest of the world, and especially with Turkey.

MEPs display a clear attachment to a separation between religion and politics, whatever institutional form such a separation may take. There is a consensus that there should be no religious influence on the selection of political rulers. Opinions are more divided regarding whether churches should make their voices heard on political options. Some countries with a pluralist tradition favour the free expression of all private interests in the formation of the common good, others are much more monolithic and trust the state for the definition of the public interest. There is even less agreement when it comes to practical applications. On questions requiring arbitration between the neutrality of institutions or rules and individual freedom of choice (such as the right of a nurse not to perform an abortion), MEPs are polarized. Overall, there is little potential for conflicts and cleavages on religious issues in themselves, but there is a significant potential for the politicization of religiously loaded ethical or cultural issues (Foret, 2014).

Shifting now from the effects of religion at the individual level of MEPs to its impact on the EP as an institution, its inscription in the EU political system and its policy action, the following section discusses the weight of Christian democracy in the genesis and functioning of European representative democracy. It then addresses how religion is dealt with as a policy object, or rather as a component of other issues, using the following examples: identity politics; counter-radicalization; freedom of religion and belief; and the politics of morality.

## The European Parliament, a bastion of a Christian democratic Europe?

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As a representative body of the EU, the EP is the reflection of European ideological, cultural, and denominational diversity. As such, it offers a structure of opportunity for the expression of religiously inspired forces. The main illustration is Christian democracy as the mainstream party family commonly assumed to have driven the process of European integration from scratch. This view is largely true but calls for some qualifications. First, Christian democrats did not embrace the supranational electoral and parliamentary challenge unconditionally; second, the Christian democratic reference has declined and has unequal salience across Europe; and third, once elected, MEPs must comply with usual constraints of EU policy making, especially to moderate their ideological stances, to be ready to cut deals, and to build coalitions.

### Christian democrats and Europe: a choice of reason as much as conviction

p. 328 The supposedly 'Christian-democratic DNA' of European integration has been qualified by many scholars, who highlight both the circumstantial adhesion of this political family to European unification and its internal divides. Christian democratic parties had to join forces to counterbalance existing socialist and communist internationalist networks. They did so at various times and places according to their domestic power games. They had to revise the boundaries of their ideology to integrate newcomers in order to secure a majority at the EP, but at the cost of a dilution of the Christian democratic orthodoxy. ↪ Successive enlargements to areas without a strong Christian democratic tradition have led to an even looser union.

Historically, the Vatican has cultivated an ambivalent relation to European unification, being both supportive of a continental alliance able to contain nationalism, war, and communism and defiant towards supranational institutions likely to be bedrocks of secularism, materialism or American/Protestant influence. National Christian democratic parties reflect this duality. For the Catholic Church, European institutions were one instrument among others for achieving higher (moral and pastoral) and larger (geographical) ends (Chenaux, 2007). Christian democratic parties followed this logic. Being in power in many Member States, they provided the leaders acting as Founding Fathers of the Communities. However, the leadership of Christian democracy in the building of European unity was described as a 'hegemony by default' rather than as the historic triumph of their worldview, highlighting the opportunistic conversion to a cause that was not always congruent with their ideological agenda (Kaiser, 2007). Besides, this conversion was partly inspired by the wish to discipline majorities by promoting 'constrained democracy', thereby keeping representative assemblies at bay and enabling elites from the executive branch of power and from technocratic institutions to lead the political process far from the pressure of elections (Müller, 2011: 148–9). This vision was consecrated by the Maastricht Treaty, when the attachment to popular sovereignty was weakened enough to pave the way for delegation and subordination to the EU institutions among which the EP was far from being the main beneficiary.

In the decades following the Second World War, Christian democrats transferred the consociational model from the countries in which they were in power to the European level. A complex system of governance links interest groups and civil society to decision making, organizes a permanent system of negotiation to build the largest possible coalition, and hollows out from the political debate any drama likely to radicalize positions and to make compromises more difficult. In this logic, the EP is bound to be an echo chamber of trans-party, trans-institutional, and transnational bargaining rather than an autonomous arena for political conflict. The containment of political passions and the deliberation monopolized by party elites also prevents the assembly from becoming prominent in the political and public spheres. In short, contemporary features of European representative democracy such as the European elections as second

order elections, the strength of lobbying at the EP, and the complex, rather dull style of EU parliamentary politics are part and parcel of its Christian democratic and consociational heritage.

This Christian democratic heritage is far from being homogenous, and forces running under this label have different ideological agendas and European orientations. After 1945, the mainstream approach was structured mainly by liberal economic ideas, whereas the earlier social sensitivity had shrunk, inspiring market-oriented European policies (Gehler and Kaiser, 2004). Within the Christian democratic family, denominational differences emerged regarding parliamentary control; for example Protestant Christian democratic parties promote strong national parliamentary supervision of European affairs, while p. 329 predominantly Catholic parties promote weaker control and ↳ subsequently more room for manoeuvre for the EP (Hamerly, 2011: 214–39). These differences between Catholic and Protestant cultures are also visible in the attitudes of Christian democratic parties regarding multiculturalization (Minkenberg, 2018: 53–79) and Europeanization (Nelsen and Guth, 2015).

The ultimate incentive for Christian democracy to organize itself at the European scale was the introduction of direct universal suffrage in European elections in 1974 and the requirement to create a truly pan-European party, leading to the launch of the European People's Party in 1976 (Saint-Ouen, 1999: 29–43). Later, the necessity to enlarge coalitions led to alliances with conservative parties displaying little or no Christian democratic ethos. Over the years, British Tories with Margaret Thatcher, Forza Italia with Silvio Berlusconi, and Fidesz–Hungarian Civic Alliance with Viktor Orbán were among the stranger bedfellows of more traditional Christian democratic formations (Hanley and Ysmal, 2000: 203–21). The Eastern enlargements of the EU brought in more countries without a Christian democratic tradition and forced the EPP to accommodate partners who either had stronger but unstable and/or controversial references to religion in their doctrine, or had no reference at all (Grzymala-Busse, 2013). Such evolutions reflect the contemporary status of religion. It is a distinctive symbolic resource in electoral competition; an identity marker demonstrating the continuity of party history; but no longer an ideological matrix, nor a framework for voting, coalition building, or decision making.

The political logic of Christian democracy searching for the centre, oscillating between right and left and between social democrats and liberals is congruent with the power game within the EP (Seiler, 2003). It comes with the reduction or the concealment of their confessional message, a message already weakened by secularization. Throughout the history of the EPP, the religious reference served to differentiate it from competing political offers (social democracy to its left, conservatism and the nationalist right to its right). Religion was periodically mobilized as a normative source in value-loaded debates but without much direct effect as the EP seldom rules on issues such as bioethics. When it does, cultural clashes may occur, expressed in the divergent worldviews on polarizing issues such as abortion and stem cell research. However, these episodic feuds do not significantly alter existing political and legal frameworks (Mondo, 2018). The use of religion is always clearly subordinated to tactical imperatives and ranges from a civilizational vision to an identity marker, or from a value invoked in times of crisis to a mere mnemonic trace.

## Religion as a problem or a component of public policy

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In the activity of the EP, religion is an issue to deal with, for example in the dialogue between European and religious institutions imposed by the treaties or other less formal ↳ channels. It is also a component of issues such as identity politics, in for example the debate on the Christian heritage of Europe; or security, in the involvement of the assembly in the conduct of the EU counter-terrorism and counter-radicalization strategy. p. 330

Like any other EU institution, the EP implements Article 17 TFEU institutionalizing an open, transparent, and regular dialogue between the EU institutions and churches, religious associations, and philosophical and non-confessional organizations. It does so in a way congruent with its status as the representative body of the EU while also reflecting the input and the personal convictions of the incumbent president of the EP. As an outspoken Catholic, Hans-Gert Pöttering (2007–9) was very happy to participate in this dialogue. Jerzy Buzek (2009–12), a committed Christian from a Protestant background, was considered more moderate than Pöttering in his advocacy of religion but remained a firm supporter of the dialogue. His secular successor, Martin Schulz (2012–7), was significantly less enthusiastic while acknowledging the institutional relevance of such meetings. Antonio Tajani (2017–9) reinvested the practice with fresh political meaning. This suggests that this high-level dialogue has become institutionalized and is no more dependent on the incumbent President of the EP but still leaves room for individual interpretations and is influenced by the political context.

The dialogue occurs through several high-level conferences each year with religious and philosophical groups and deals with issues connected to the political agenda of the assembly (European Parliament, 2018a). In 2015, the sessions focused on religious radicalism, fundamentalism, and educational contributions to tackling radicalization; in 2016, on the role of women in countering radicalization and the future of Jewish communities in Europe; in 2017 on the future of Europe in 2025, and religion in the EU's external policies; in 2018 on the European social pillar and human rights; in 2019 on artificial intelligence; and in 2020 on the European Green Deal. Thus, European and religious institutions discuss both religion per se and as part and parcel of broader problems of governance. In addition, parliamentary deliberations on religiously loaded problems are enriched by a series of book presentations on the theme 'Religion & Society'. In 2017, for example, Olivier Roy was invited to a debate on his book *Jihad and Death—the Global Appeal of Islamic State* (European Parliamentary Research Service, 2017), a further illustration of the strong pressure to address security issues.

p. 331 The EP mobilizes other policy tools to deal with religiously related matters. It may be *resolutions*, such as the ones passed on the state of fundamental rights in the EU in 2015 and 2016, and more precisely on the freedom of religion and belief. In these texts, the assembly advocated the neutrality of the state as the safest protection against discrimination towards any religious, atheist, or agnostic communities, guaranteeing equal treatment of all religions and beliefs. Another—even milder—instrument is to commission a *briefing paper* to flag an issue, as the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education did in 2006 on intercultural and inter-religious dialogue to encourage a peaceful mutual accommodation between denominations and between religious and secular communities (Pasikowska-Schnass, 2018).

Within the EP, the initiatives of some MEPs have also established *ad hoc arenas to discuss religion*. The European Parliament's Intergroup on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance (European Parliament Intergroup on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance, 2018), set up in 2014, focuses on freedom of religion and belief and publishes an annual report surveying discrimination against religious minorities worldwide. It also liaises with internal and external partners, for example the Special Envoy for the Promotion of the Freedom of Religion or Belief outside the EU and the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). Other more normative endeavours that are less likely to mobilize largely across party boundaries can be found in the loose structures of working groups. These are frequently short-lived and limited initiatives but are still able to catch temporary political and media attention. Examples are the Working Group on Human Dignity with the mission to 'promote human dignity based on the anthropological truth that man is born in the image and likeness of God' (Working Group on Human Dignity, 2018) and the ephemeral Ecumenical Intergroup at the European Parliament, launched in 2009 with the purpose 'to join efforts to strengthen Europe's Christian roots' (Ecumenical Intergroup at the European Parliament, 2018). The latter group started with gusto but did not survive the term.

Another interesting illustration of the evolution of the handling of religiously loaded issues in the EP is the intergroup originally dedicated to the Ways of St James. The restoration and promotion of pilgrim routes has been a flagship achievement of European cultural policy as a symbol of a common history and identity—the religious dimension, however, being always second to the cultural in order to be eligible for funding. Progressively, the Ways of St James has lost precedence; the structure is now labelled as ‘European tourism development, cultural heritage, Ways of St James and other European cultural routes’. This offers a good illustration of institutional propensity to merge religious matters into more neutral and functional initiatives.

p. 332 As a political group, the EPP has also launched several initiatives. Following a practice established under Paul VI, the Christian democratic group is presented to the incumbent pope at the beginning of each term (Fontaine, 2009: 494–5). The EPP also engages in dialogues with other denominations. A consultation with the Orthodox Church has been organized every year since 2006 to consolidate links between Western and Eastern Europe. Interactions with Muslim countries and the World Islamic Conference have intensified since 2001. From 2008 onwards, this dialogue with religious actors has been systematized on a regional basis with the aim of preparing future enlargements and enhancing European influence (Fontaine, 2009: 498–501). In response, secularist forces tried to counterbalance what they perceived as a religious reawakening by organizing platforms and conferences, but this counterattack has lost momentum (European Parliament Platform for Secularism in Politics, 2014).

Other occurrences of religion in the institutional life of the EP are *visits by religious leaders* that can become controversial (Foret, 2015). The organization of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue in 2008 triggered the indignation of some MEPs who considered that the number of religious guests turned the event into a Year of Dialogue Between Religions. The solemnity of the invitation issued to the Grand Mufti of Syria Ahmad Bader Hassoun on 15 January 2008 for the launch event (European Parliament, 2008a) was particularly criticized. Other religious leaders have been enthusiastically welcomed at the Parliament because they symbolized political causes. The Dalai Lama received a standing ovation for his speech on 4 December 2008 and several MEPs even began fasting in solidarity with the Tibetan cause (European Parliament, 2008b). The Sakharov Prize awarded to personalities throughout the world who have dedicated their lives to the defence of human rights and better understanding between human beings is a final possibility for dealing with religion. Among the recipients of the awards are victims of persecution by religious authorities as well as religious actors working for good causes (European Parliament, 2019). It emphasizes religion both as a cause and an answer to violence, contributing to some extent to its mainstream ‘securitization’, namely its treatment as a security matter.

A further way to understand the *role of the EP in the management of religiously loaded issues in EU governance* is to cast a look at some key problems and to identify its specific input in the interinstitutional game. A first example is identity politics and the debate about references to God or to the Christian heritage of Europe in the European Constitution that has developed since the end of the 1990s. Hans-Gert Pöttering illustrates both the opportunities and constraints offered by parliamentary politics. As the leader of the EPP, he was vocal in claiming the recognition of the Christian roots of Europe. The EPP defines itself as a non-confessional force with Christian roots, and Pöttering labelled it as an ‘ecumenical group’ (Fontaine, 2009: 481). This broad permissive formula allows the flexibility that is necessary to accommodate internal ideological diversity and to avoid antagonizing secular parts of the electorate while retaining a distinct identity. The EPP did not manage to impose the reference to the Christian heritage in the preamble of the European constitution, but Pöttering stressed that its values permeated the text:

A constitution needs values. The values that bind us together are almost as crucial as the procedures, for if we have no awareness of values, we have no foundation for taking political



action. We welcome the fact that many of our values, which we define as Christian, have been included: human dignity, the dignity of older people, the dignity of children too [ ... ]

(Fontaine, 2009: 402)

p. 333

Once elected president of the EP in January 2007, Pöttering became even more restrained to stay in tune with his role as the representative of the assembly as a whole ↵ and left his successor as chair of the EPP to lead the offensive to advocate the Christian heritage of Europe (Kubosova, 2007).

Another case study concerns *counter-terrorism and counter-radicalization*. In this policy, the EP displays its usual features in its efforts to contain the potential politicization of normative issues likely to hamper the compromises necessary to its functioning, while keeping its role as an advocate for values and human rights. The EU has emerged as an actor in the fight against radicalization with the European strategy against terrorism established in 2005, and subsequently revised in 2008 and 2014. The European approach focuses on prevention, with a strong involvement of civil society. Religion itself remains an elusive topic in institutional documents and—to a lesser extent—in political discourses and policy practices. In this process aimed at containing extreme religion while dealing as little as possible with religion per se, the EP has not differed strikingly from other EU institutions.

In its contribution to the EU counter-radicalization strategy, the EP tries to balance its usual vigilance on democratic basics with the need to address popular expectations about security. It insists on the necessity for an anti-discrimination directive also based on the grounds of religion to address the ostracism met by Muslim citizens. In its February 2017 Resolution on ‘Improving the functioning of the European Union building on the potential of the Lisbon Treaty’ (European Parliament, 2017a), it searches for the just balance between democratic and judicial oversight over counterterrorism policies, and the exchange of information and data between national law enforcement authorities and intelligence services, and with Europol, Frontex, and Eurojust. Upon the initiative of the European People’s Party (EPP), the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), and the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) Groups, the Special Committee on Terrorism (TERR) was set up on 6 July 2017. The purpose of TERR was to evaluate the impartiality of facts provided by law enforcement authorities at all levels of governance and to propose appropriate measures against terrorism-related crimes, including the prevention of radicalization. In the early work of TERR, religion seemed to figure more as a root *cause* of radicalization rather than as an element of *counter-radicalization*. In its later work, it went further in thinking about religion as part of the solution. In its draft report in June 2018, it specifically asks that Member States encourage and tolerate only practices of Islam that are in full accordance with EU values (para. 15), and that the EU should promote higher education opportunities for chaplains and accreditation of theological education programmes that integrate human values. These statements, however modest, deal more specifically with the implication of public institutions in religious affairs than those by other EU institutions (European Parliament, 2018b). Meanwhile, the prospective unit of the EP, the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), contributed to the progressive awareness of the need to fight a different kind of threat—the phenomenon of ‘homegrown’ radicalization, that is, radical Islam rooted in Western Europe, by way of extremists seeking to recruit young Muslims to help further their cause and the increasing number of European ‘foreign fighters’.



## Conclusion

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The occurrences, effects, and treatment of religion at the EP reflect what is happening in European societies in terms of the loss of social relevance, individualization, deinstitutionalization, and culturalization of faith. European politics amplify trends at work in national politics and lead to the reformulation of existing identities and practices to comply with the diversity inherent in supranational arenas without altering them too deeply. At the institutional and policy level, the EP implements the usual EU techniques to search for the lowest common denominator and avoid conflicts when dealing with value-loaded issues such as religion. Overall, the analysis of the EP contradicts both stereotypes of an EU either as a secularist and interest-driven policy machine or as a Christian club ruled by the Vatican. It confirms the uncertainty of the shifting and weakening boundaries between politics, religion, and culture in contemporary Europe.

Looking forwards, the reinforcement of ongoing trends is likely to aggravate the tension between the decline and diversification of religion in European societies and its increasing use as a symbolic marker in politics. Faith has less and less relevance in individual and collective lives. With its normative content and authority hollowed out, it becomes a cultural resource available for contradictory claims. Religion may become even more controversial as a vicarious memory is mobilized to harden the boundaries between ‘us’ (‘Christian Europe’ or ‘secular enlightened Europe’) and ‘them’ (‘the Muslims’ or ‘the obscurantist religionists’). It may encourage polarization on religiously loaded issues relating to the transformation and commodification of the human body and mind (ranging from artificial intelligence to transhumanism or genetic engineering), or to the future of humanity (climate change and the exploitation versus protection of nature). Religion may also provide ethical references and inspirations to challenge the rule of the market or social inequalities, to question the effects of technologies, and to contest mainstream values. Reframed as a minority identity, religion may find a fresh, subversive function. Its main opponent is likely to be a less aggressive secularism rather than ignorance or indifference. The EU at large and the EP in particular are not the easiest arenas for the expression of religious views. However, as the contrast between an ever more secular Europe and a still religious external world sharpens, European institutions may find new opportunities to pose as the incarnations and reinventors of renewed European identity and unity.

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CHAPTER

## 19 Religion and the European External Action Service

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### Abstract

This contribution analyses the diplomacy of religion carried out by the European External Action Service (EEAS), and questions its autonomy and distinctiveness vis-à-vis other diplomacies. Several dimensions are studied: how foreign policy is dealing with the ‘return’ of religion in international affairs; the practices of the EEAS regarding religion against the general background of what Member States, third countries, and international organizations do in this respect; how the EEAS balances the interests of Member States, the requirements of the geopolitical contexts and field realities; the EEAS’s advocacy for specific causes such as the freedom of religion and belief (FoRB) and the establishment of religion as a standard diplomatic issue. The conclusion characterizes the EU’s external strategy on religion as the outcome of both its political and institutional logic and Europe’s societal secularization in a world that is still highly religious.

**Keywords:** European External Action Service, diplomacy, religion, freedom of religion, secularization, securitization, culturalization

**Subject:** History of Religion, Religion

**Series:** Oxford Handbooks

FROM the end of the 1970s religion has dramatically re-emerged as a factor in international relations (IR). States and international organizations have struggled to come to terms with the ideational and normative logic of religious actors and issues, an approach that collides with a diplomacy based on realist and shifting conceptions of national interests and sovereignties. In this context, the European External Action Service (EEAS), formally established in 2010, has committed itself to developing a global approach to religion as an issue and a resource for foreign policy. In this endeavour, the EEAS must comply with specific requirements due to its status as an external body of the European Union (EU). It must combine the different diplomatic traditions, worldviews, geopolitical statuses, and histories of relationships between religion and politics in the Member States. The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the triggers, modalities, and effects of the EEAS’s approach to religion and to question its autonomy and distinctiveness regarding the practices of other diplomacies.

The text is organized as follows. The first section documents the ‘return’ of religion in IR and the reluctance of intellectual and political discourses to acknowledge the renewed salience of the religious issue. The second section compares the policy of the EEAS regarding religion to what Member States, third countries, and international organizations do, and traces the influences of these external models on European actions. The third section describes how the EEAS deals with religion in practice while searching for the right balance between the interests of Member States, the requirements of the geopolitical contexts and field realities. The fourth section focuses on the effects of the EEAS’s decision to advocate for specific causes such as the freedom of religion and belief (FoRB) or, in a broader perspective, to establish religion as a standard diplomatic issue and skill. The conclusion characterizes the EU external strategy on religion as the outcome of both its political and institutional logic and the societal evolution of a secularized Europe in a world that is still highly religious.

## Religion in international relations: a reluctant comeback

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Ignored for decades, religion has become increasingly recognized as a salient variable in world politics, and mostly (though not always correctly) as a *casus belli*. Many scholars identify a turning point in the war between Israel and Egypt in 1967 and in the defeat of the secularist Gamal Abdel Nasser (Shah and Duffy Toft, 2009: 105–28). A second major event was the Iranian Revolution symbolized by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979. September 2001 was the final blow. Over 80 per cent of all articles published on religion in journals on international relations appeared after 9/11 (Hassner, 2010). IR relies increasingly on religion to explain patterns of conflicts and cooperation (Fox and Sandler, 2006; Snyder, 2011; Wilson, 2011). Nevertheless, despite this fresh salience as a security matter, religion remains a secondary and understudied variable within mainstream IR theories (Haynes, 2011).

If the modern state is not the outcome of a radical secularization process, understood as a *caesura* from religion, but of the incorporation of religion into politics (Gorski, 2000; Mavelli, 2011), this also holds true for international relations. The ‘restorative narrative’ that has replaced the secularization thesis as the main frame of religion in IR needs to be revised, as according to Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, religion has never left. What is new is not the movement of religion in and out of foreign affairs, but how it is defined and used in political discourse and practices. If there is a change, it is indeed in the ‘strategic operationalization of religion’ by the states. Before 9/11, states were assumed to deal with religion internally, or not at all. After 9/11, religion has visibly been re-established on the diplomatic agenda in two cases: when dangerous forms of religion escape the control of one country and are considered to be in need of international disciplining by coalitions of states; and when religion can be mobilized to promote the common, public, and international good (i.e. humanitarian and development projects, human rights campaigns, transitional justice efforts, and so on) (Shakman Hurd, 2012: 944–6).

The nature of the strategic change is twofold: it concerns the internationalization of religion, and the dichotomization between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ religion. The new motto of foreign policy is to empower peaceful religion and to marginalize dangerous religion. According to Shakman Hurd, actors such as the United States (US), the United Nations (UN), or the EU have played a key role in this process (Shakman Hurd, 2012: 944–6). The dominant repertoire of action is law, and religious freedom tends to become the matrix to deal with religion. However, law and religious freedom are not neutral vis-à-vis religion as they privilege some religious forms over others (practices over beliefs for example) and consequently some denominations over others (especially those with a clear hierarchy and institutional spokespersons able to voice their claims in the political arena) (Shakman Hurd, 2015).

The rise of the EEAS as a new international player and its almost immediate effort to develop a global strategy on religion must be understood against this background. The nascent European diplomacy is

shaped by both the experiences of Member States and the influence of external models in the ways in which it addresses spiritual matters.

## Inventing a European diplomacy of religion

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The strategy of the EEAS on religion is the result of a pragmatic approach, acknowledging step by step both the necessity and the urgency of dealing with religion. It looks rather like a bottom-up dynamic nurtured by the uncertainties of field diplomats reporting to headquarters for directions and provoking a snowball effect, prompting the senior management to embrace the topic. The process started through the constitution of informal networks of diplomats across Europe but also across the Atlantic, networks that offered arenas for collective learning and the sharing of best practice. Progressively, a kind of institutionalization has occurred as religion has increasingly become a mainstream topic, an interinstitutional affair and a component of the EU policy agenda.

As already indicated, the reasons pushing the EEAS to become a political player on religious issues are more pragmatic (religion must be dealt with because it is increasingly on the agenda) than normative (religion is an ethical source able to inspire European action in terms of efficiency, justice, or democracy). Such an approach suggests that the EEAS developed expertise on religion largely out of necessity. Religion has imposed itself as a pressing matter on the external agenda of the EU and requires *ad hoc* expertise. At the same time, however, this offers an opportunity as it allows European diplomats to position themselves as facilitators within the limits set by their legal and political resources.

### p. 341 **Why religion became a policy object for the EEAS: ‘because it is out there’**

As a relatively new subject in foreign policy, religion has not yet become fixed in a path dependency which establishes the distribution and codification of roles. That said, it is directly related to national cultures, traditional arrangements between churches and states, imperial histories, and geopolitical interests. As such, it is highly symbolic and controversial. The EU’s encroachment into this field has been closely scrutinized as the block has no jurisdiction over the definition and management of religious issues. According to Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the Union respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States. Extended to foreign affairs, this means that European diplomacy in matters of religion is heavily framed by the nature of the state as a role model, a partner, and an interlocutor.

The EU has followed external incentives and examples to emerge as an actor on religious issues. European institutions received frequent invitations to contribute to international conferences on religion but lacked suitable staff to frame a response. The UN and the USA have acknowledged the importance of religious issues and of faith-based organizations for much longer. Several EU Member States have been exploring ways to deal with religion in their own diplomatic practice (some, like France, since the 1920s, most since the 1990s). In 2008, the launch of a ‘like-minded group’ by individuals occupying various positions in national administrations in Europe and America greatly helped in creating common practices. Some of the participants moved later to the EEAS where they institutionalized these exchanges (Bilde, 2015). As an outcome of this dynamic, the EEAS co-founded and co-chairs (with the US Department of State) the Transatlantic Policy Network on Religion and Diplomacy (TPNRD).<sup>1</sup> This network gathers representatives of foreign ministries and experts from the US, Canada, the UN, and a dozen European countries. The goal of the network is to equip participants and their respective ministries to analyse religious dynamics more effectively and to engage religious actors in the pursuit of shared policy objectives. It is a *carrefour* between scholars and practitioners to increase expertise on religion and international affairs. The TPNRD is hosted by the Cambridge Institute on Religion & International Studies (CIRIS) at Cambridge University and is



supported by a grant from the US-based Henry Luce Foundation. Thus, the incubator of the establishment of religion as a European policy issue is not strictly European, nor is it congruent with the perimeter of the EU (there are no representatives from some Member States, whereas non-members, like Norway or Switzerland, are included); it is spurred by informal political entrepreneurs more than by an institutional project. This kind of bottom-up, hybrid, and partially imported innovation is no exception in EU policy making.

## p. 342 **The impossibility of a normatively driven policy**

There is little or no trace of advocacy for the positive role of religion in the genesis of the EEAS's policy. Pierre Vimont, who was the executive general secretary of the EEAS between 2010 and 2015, describes how religion is perceived as a 'quasi outcome' of human rights policy (Vimont, 2014: 329–35). It had emerged before through other European competencies (trade, development, humanitarian aid), but Member States drew strict red lines to limit initiatives of European institutions on the topic (Vimont, 2014: 329–30). And quite apart from the reluctance of Member States to strengthen the EEAS, their diversity of spiritual and philosophical heritages is also an obstacle. Frequently, European diplomats struggle to define a normative common position that is sufficiently consensual to be promoted actively, or at least cannot do that quickly and clearly enough to act in due time.

Besides these structural constraints, the EEAS is also wary of denominational or ethnocentric biases. Some right-wing MEPs and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are keen to endow the EU with the responsibility of protecting Christian minorities worldwide. However, this would expose the bloc to accusations of privileging one denomination over others. Besides, Christian populations on the ground are frequently afraid of being singled out on a denominational basis and defended by a foreign power, as this creates risks of being accused of disloyalty to their own country (Vimont, 2014: 331). Another danger for the EU's diplomacy is to appear as advancing a Western version of modernity, limiting faith to the private sphere, which is not congruent with the realities of other parts of the world. Therefore, the attempts to promote the 'European way' of accommodating religion must be both cautious and flexible (Vimont, 2014: 333). All these reasons explain why religion cannot work as an explicit ethical source or cause for EU diplomacy. It is at best an instrumental resource oscillating constantly between symbolic and pragmatic policy.

## **The EEAS in action**

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As a recent organization, the EEAS is a latecomer compared with multi-secular national diplomacies. Seniority matters in a diplomatic field driven by tradition. Consequently, the EEAS is bound to respect established rules and hierarchies to gain recognition as a full diplomatic player, while trying to innovate and gain influence at the margins. Religion as an 'old' object re-emerging in 'new' clothes offers opportunities to do just that. There is no evidence of rupture between the practices of the EEAS and those of Member States, on religious issues. On the ground, the European foreign service tries to accommodate religion in a secular way according to the region of the world, the status of the third country and the interests at stake. The state is confirmed as the main actor in the handling of religion. Law may be the only legitimate repertoire to deal with religion <sup>1</sup> but politics prevails in practice. There are constant interactions and occasional tensions between how religion is dealt with in domestic and external affairs. Finally, the association of religion with violence remains strong.<sup>2</sup>



## **The EEAS, an addition to but not a major transformation of national diplomacies of religion**

European initiatives on religion mirror and amplify pre-existing policy trends in national diplomacies. The reception of these initiatives by Member States oscillates between positive cooperation, lip service, and ignorance. Small states with no major geopolitical ambitions and too few resources to build expertise on such a peripheral topic welcome the input of European diplomacy. Other small or medium-sized countries have developed a specific diplomacy on religion aiming to balance loyalty to multi-level European action with their own practices. This is the case for Finland,<sup>3</sup> as well as the Netherlands.<sup>4</sup> Larger states are more likely to ignore the EEAS on religion just like any other subject. Germany aims both to improve EU action, which is criticized as too slow and too abstract, and to exercise a direct influence, for example on religious freedom in UN spheres where one of its citizens (Heiner Bielefeldt, UN Special Rapporteur on FoRB between 2010 and 2016) played a key role.<sup>5</sup> French and British diplomacy, anchored in centuries of worldwide influence, are reluctant to support an autonomous EU foreign policy. To put things bluntly, the bigger the states, the bigger the stakes; and the more prestigious the context, the more limited the level of Europeanization. As stated by a senior French diplomat in Washington, to speak on behalf of the EU is useful only in a context where a single Member State is too weak alone or does not want to accept accountability (for example to blame China about violations of religious freedom): 'The European dimension works well in countries where it is difficult. In Washington, when you are France, you do not need Europe.'<sup>6</sup> Countries that are big diplomatic players also have a propensity to consider religion from a more political standpoint in order to tackle all the implications. As a British diplomat emphasized: 'Officially it is human rights, but it is more than that. As a consequence of extremism, Islamic State, questions are: how do we understand religion better?'.<sup>7</sup> Europe is only one part of the new policy context, not a driving or transformative force of a new diplomacy of religion.

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## **Pragmatism versus universalism: contextualizing European diplomacy on religion**

European diplomats' autonomy and agency depend on the stakes and on geography. They may have greater margins of initiative in a small African state of little strategic interest than in Washington, where every Member State has its own agenda. Larger countries are more inclined to keep their cards close to their chest in political hotspots or in their traditional zones of influence. The status of religion depends on a policy mix determined by the context and the issues. In places where major economic or security problems are pressing, spiritual affairs are less likely to emerge (unless they are part of the security problem). The more powerful the interlocutors, the less the EU may wish to upset them with human rights questions.

Attitudes towards Russia offer an example of a dual European strategy, as shown by our survey of EU delegations: occasional partnerships with religious civil society occur to defend human rights, but also to find indirect access to the ruling class. The EU Delegation in Moscow is cautious when meeting minority denominational organizations to avoid making them look like 'foreign agents'. Meanwhile, interactions with the powerful Russian Orthodox Church are instrumental in opening channels of communication with political authorities. Exchanges with religious NGOs are calculated to seek information and influence without causing offence. Another configuration occurs when denominational cleavages coincide with other divisions. In Belarus, religious freedom is a *casus belli* between the Orthodox majority population and the Catholic Polish minority. Hence, the EU Delegation in Minsk is extra careful when dealing with religious matters. Conversely, in Rwanda, a country still deeply marked by genocide and ethnic divisions, meeting with religious groups is a priority for European diplomats to prevent further crises. These examples show how religion is always considered according to the specificities of each situation.

## A preference to act with and through the Member States

EU delegations are the local voice of the Union in their host country. Three types of actions are available: putting an issue on the agenda of regular meetings with national authorities; joint political initiatives with the national diplomatic services of Member States; press releases and public statements. Diplomats prioritize the routinized dialogue with their local peers to express discontent or concern. When the gravity of the situation requires an *ad hoc* move, wherever possible this is made in coordination with the national diplomacies of Member States, or with other international bodies (such as UN agencies). The strategy of final resort, publicly voicing disapproval, is a ‘nuclear option’, mostly used when the local authorities are unreliable partners, either because the state is failing or because it is authoritarian.

p. 345 Member States assign strict limits to the autonomy of the EEAS in the handling of religious issues. EU delegations organize periodical meetings with national embassies <sup>4</sup> and religion may crop up incidentally in the debate but there is no political discussion per se for three reasons:<sup>8</sup> a consensus on general principles; a focus on means rather than on ends; and a distrust towards the lack of ‘political capacity’ of the EEAS. First, the idea that ‘there is not much discussion because basically it is not necessary to talk about something you agree upon’ is a recurrent leitmotif.<sup>9</sup> Next, diplomats prefer to deal with the ‘how’ rather than with the ‘what’, emphasizing that religion is treated as business as usual: ‘Discussions deal with procedures for working together, on reaching considered decisions, using a bureaucratic approach such as we have with our own ministry of foreign affairs. There is little discussion on matters of substance, on major principles.’<sup>10</sup> Finally, national diplomats are concerned by the EU delegations’ lack of reliability. They view European officials as lacking in the political sense required to handle controversial subjects such as religion. Besides, to negotiate a ‘European line’ takes so much time that it is impossible to move with the urgency imposed by a crisis. And when religion does come to the fore, it is usually in a crisis context.

Yet, according to an external standpoint, the indirect influence of the EEAS is not to be ignored as a catalyst. As stated by American diplomats,<sup>11</sup> ‘the EU has the ability to shape the conversation and to force Member States to take some issues into account’. In short, interactions with European diplomacy are instrumental in reaching out to national powers.

## A constant combination of principles and pragmatism

Acting through law offers the advantage of respecting EU competences and usual practices. However, it does not always overcome the divergences in the interpretations of fundamental norms stemming from different national cultures and interests. The politicization of the management of religion is unavoidable when European diplomats face conflictual situations.

p. 346 For a diplomat dealing with religion, the legal approach offers many advantages. It is legitimate since the rule of law is the founding justification and the ultimate purpose of a democratic state. Law entails a presumption of objectivity and releases the agent from any personal accountability. It is held to be clear and capable of resolving any doubt by reference to a ‘pyramid of authority’. Yet, when putting policy into practice, the picture is far more troubled. European diplomats testify that there are no clear-cut instructions that might inform a homogeneous *modus operandi* on religion. Recurrent topics emerge: pragmatism and its limits; sincerity; the gap between guidelines defined in Brussels and the flexibility required to comply with foreign contexts. Bringing together religious leaders for an interfaith dialogue and/or a photograph may be an end for <sup>4</sup> Brussels headquarters ticking boxes such as ‘dialogue with civil society’ and ‘promotion of human rights’. However, in their regular exchanges with local actors, those staffing EU delegations and offices must demonstrate the sense and continuity of European political action to maintain their credibility and audience. Pragmatism may also consist in adapting the law to avoid offending local sensibilities and initiating conflicts. Sometimes, there is a tacit agreement not to inform headquarters notably with regard to

arrangements that are stretching official policy lines, leaving the actors in the field with more freedom but also more responsibility if things go the wrong way.

## **The association of religion with violence**

The treatment of religion predominantly through the prism of human rights may have perverse effects well emphasized by the literature. Where and when there are no human rights issues, religion is not an object of diplomatic interest. Only a flagrant violation of rights will attract attention to it. As a result, religion becomes invisible in Western-style democracies where such violations most certainly exist but with less physical violence. In contrast, it is overemphasized in countries where human rights are blatantly endangered. This may lead to exacerbating the opposition between a secularized safe 'Western world' and a religious and dangerous 'rest of the world'. This kind of opposition appears even more frequently when the EU deals with Muslim societies. Framing a geopolitical situation in religious terms may serve to conceal embarrassing issues. The Arab Spring uprisings were motivated by economic crises and calls for democratization and dignity, but had a limited religious dimension at the outset. Western countries were nevertheless keen to interpret these social movements as a quest for religious freedom congruent with the European liberal model. This was a way to downgrade social claims and prevent any connection with protests contesting European economic policies such as the 'Occupy' and 'Indignados' movements (Hyvönen, 2014).

EU delegations adjust their treatment of religion and their advocacy for human rights according to the level of insecurity on the ground. In situations of endemic violence, where no authority is able to impose the rule of law, references to human rights are useless (as for example in Niger under the threat of Boko Haram and the jihadists). The EU strategy becomes, therefore, a constant search for a policy mix between security and human development, the latter encompassing human rights, including those related to religion. Realpolitik may lead to collaboration against terrorism with governments that are themselves culpable regarding religious freedom. In Kazakhstan, for example, European diplomats criticized the prohibition of Jehovah's Witnesses' publications by the same authorities with whom they collaborate to prevent Islamic radicalization. Violence is a trigger to take the religious factor into account, with the risk of exaggerating its causality. It is also a reason to minimize it in terms of human rights if European interests demand it. The link between the level of violence and religion is thus multidimensional rather than unidirectional.

## **Religious freedom and beyond: towards a European global diplomacy of religion?**

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The assessment of the EEAS's approach to religion is frequently limited to FoRB as it is the cause put forward by the EU in its role as the champion of human rights. But looking at the broader picture, the question is the following: how and to what extent is religion dealt with by the EEAS as a transversal geopolitical factor and a source of soft power requiring 'religious literacy' as a standard skill for any diplomat?

## FoRB as a new mantra in IR with ambivalent effects

The literature describes the rise of FoRB as driven by different trends. It is frequently presented as part of the global ‘third wave’ of democratization since the mid-1970s (Witte and Green, 2012). Other scholars analyse it as an outcome of the de-privatization of religion that prompts in turn more frequent interventions by public authorities to regulate it in the public sphere. The cultural pluralization of societies also plays its part by multiplying frictions between spiritual traditions and fuelling reactions of cultural defence, especially regarding Islam. Laws on FoRB may be used by minority denominations to claim recognition, but also by majority faiths to defend their status to the detriment of smaller spiritual groups (Ferrari, 2012). Thus, FoRB is presented as a result of both the societal decline of faith, and the differentiation between politics and religion, but also as a channel for the revival of religion in politics.

In the protection of FoRB, the state is both the solution and the problem. The existence of a constitutional state that respects human rights and the separation of spiritual and secular affairs is a precondition. But public authorities are frequently a major threat (Starck, 2013). The frontiers of a state, moreover, are not always hermetically sealed. Indeed, the resurgence of FoRB in the 1980s derives largely from US efforts to assert its global leadership and to disseminate a worldview congruent with its interests (Su, 2016). At the same time, there is a permanent risk of exporting the cultural wars about freedom of religion that rage in American society (Smith, 2016), and of repeating the ‘tragedy of religious freedom’ (DeGirolami, 2013) across the world. This ambivalent role of the state leads some scholars to question the link between freedom of religion and violence. Some analysts consider that the violation of religious rights is the trigger for rebellion and hostility. Conversely, others emphasize that it is the framing of conflicts in religious terms by politics and law that contributes to the hardening of cleavages, and occasionally to creating problems out of nothing when cultural diversity was previously regulated by social practices (Shani, 2014).

### p. 348 Religion through FoRB as a means rather than an end for the EEAS

The European effort to formalize and disseminate a position on FoRB must reconcile contradictory requirements: compliance with the framing of FoRB by international institutions with an affirmation of European singularity; respect for national diversity with a display of European unity; advocacy for human rights and accommodation with local interests and sensibilities. These tensions are best illustrated by the production in 2013 of a ‘doctrine’ expressed through the *EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief* (EUFoRB) (Council of the European Union, 2013).

The *Guidelines* are a non-binding document intended to explain better EU institutions and policies relating to religion. They refer to the legal basis of the policy and offer advice to interested parties on the best way to address existing norms and approaches. One purpose of EUFoRB was to give practical and publicly available instructions to EU diplomats on the ground; another was that it should embody European unity as regards major principles. To search for the widest possible consensus, religious and philosophical groups were consulted as well as MEPs and experts within and outside Europe. A number of key points emerged from these deliberations. Linking FoRB to other rights was not only a reassertion of the indivisibility of human rights, but also a way to merge religious issues with less controversial questions. Diplomats warned against two main dangers. First, endangered religious groups abroad should not be addressed as victims, but as citizens voicing legitimate claims. Meanwhile, the EU should also respect local authorities and avoid giving the impression of intruding into domestic affairs. Second, the EU should have a consistent and balanced discourse without double standards, and not criticize matters in some of its Member States that are tolerated in others.

EUFoRB’s reception was predominantly positive. Regarding civil society, both religious and philosophical lobbies had reasons for rejoicing and for regret. For Christian groups, the very existence of the *Guidelines*

represented a success in that it recognized the significance of religion. However, their claims were not entirely satisfied: the EU is defined as impartial and not aligned to any belief or religion, in contrast to the state religion or privileges granted to majority denominations in some Member States; and conscientious objection is limited to military service and does not apply to health services. Nonetheless, as much is left to implementation and to Member States, well-established religious groups were sure of continuing to be heard by national authorities. Secularist organizations resented the existence of the *Guidelines* as an illegitimate separation of FoRB from other human rights. They lobbied for an emphasis on the freedom of non-religion. They also deplored the fact that the recommendation that blasphemy offences be decriminalized in third countries was not explicitly targeted in the existing legislation of some Member States. Such a matter was, however, not within the scope of a foreign policy document. Overall, trade-offs and subsequent conflicts were left to the level of practice. Caution and silence (for example regarding the absence of formal definitions of religion) leave ample room for uncertainty.

p. 349 **In the future, more of the same?**

Since the adoption of EUFoRB, what are the prospects for the future? FoRB has lost some of its gloss at the global level. Canada, a pioneer on the topic, closed its Office of Religious Freedom in March 2016 (Lee, 2016). The issue, however, is still an axis of US foreign policy. For a while it was heavily criticized and the Barack Obama administration emphasized instead the engagement of religious actors. The Trump presidency, conversely, revived the advocacy for FoRB. Against this background, the EU has routinely reasserted its commitment to promote FoRB as part of its global human rights diplomacy (European Commission, 2015). An unexpected development has, however, been the creation by the President of the Commission of the position of Special Envoy for the Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief outside the European Union (European Commission, 2016a). In terms of policy doctrine, mandating a specific official on FoRB is not congruent with the usual EU line of considering human rights to be indivisible. It is more in tune with the long-standing US invitation to the EU to establish a high-profile agent with specific responsibility for religious freedom (Thames, 2012). It duplicates similar positions that exist in international organizations such as the OSCE or the UN. The first incumbent was Ján Figel', former Commissioner and Deputy-Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic.

The Special Envoy does not report to the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy but instead serves as Special Adviser to the Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development. A focus is put on action against radicalization in third countries. In geographic terms, the emphasis is placed on the Middle East as the most critical area regarding FoRB. The creation of the position of Special Envoy is presented as largely due to the threat of the Islamic State (Daesh) and the systematic murder of religious minorities. Other zones of attention are North and Sub-Saharan Africa and South and South-East Asia (European Commission, 2016b). The Special Envoy works increasingly with the EEAS to keep religious issues on the agenda.

## The dissemination of religion as a standard diplomatic issue and skill

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The institutionalization of FoRB within the EEAS and in other parts of the EU institutional system is part and parcel of a larger establishment of religion as a policy matter calling for more attention and competencies. Ongoing efforts in capacity building and awareness raising have led to more systematic mechanisms aiming at the reinforcement of 'religious literacy'. This fresh interest for religion duplicates the broader EU strategy for international cultural relations launched in 2016 (European Commission, 2016c). The EEAS states the need 'to be more fluent in its reading of the religio-political landscape (whether in crisis, reconciliation or stable context)' and to have a 'more ↴ operational approach' for 'the engagement with faith-based actors, including religious leaders' and the exploitation of opportunities offered by religion beyond its association with violence and security (EEAS, 2018). Several priorities are put forward. The training of staff in delegations, and not only in Brussels, is to be reinforced to increase their sensitivity to non-secular worldviews and expertise. The EEAS's doctrine regarding its engagement with political Islam must be updated to know to whom to speak, how and when, and to develop 'a "right-sized" approach that avoids either placing too much emphasis on, or, conversely, neglecting the role of religion or ideology altogether' (Schmidt, 2018). Finally, the dissemination of EEAS's expertise towards Member States must be reinforced to increase coherence, especially through the advertisement of the EEAS training modules 'Religion and Foreign Policy' and 'Political Islam/Islam in Politics' that are open to national diplomats and frequently reproduced in national ministries of foreign affairs. In the process, the EEAS is recognized as a pioneer and a leader by the Commission and hopefully by the Member States. Overall, therefore, religion is characterized as a distinctive (because of its strong normative and conflictual dimension) but not specific component of culture, and as such a potential source of influence that should be exploited, rather than reduced to a mere factor of risk. That said, it remains 'an exotic and esoteric business at best', to quote a Brussels diplomat (Mandaville and Silvestri, 2015).

## Conclusion

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This chapter has aimed to understand the reasons for and the modalities of the EEAS's actions towards religion. The underlying question probes the salience and distinctiveness of religion as a policy object in European foreign affairs. European initiatives on religion are externally driven by traumatic events, security threats, and interactions with other large powers and international institutions. However, in its modalities, the EU's policy is also an outcome of the secularization that singles out Europe compared to the rest of the world.

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The purpose of the EEAS's initiatives on religious issues is both to assert itself with respect to other European institutions and to reinforce the profile of the EU in IR. As a relatively new entity, the EEAS has found in the link between religion and human rights a cause to uphold, a cause that is sufficiently consensual and symbolic to offer an opportunity for a statement of European unity and ideals. In practice, religion and FoRB are 'business as usual' for the EU: ideational incentives (advocacy for FoRB, the display of European unity and identity) matter but are secondary to realist ones (interests and security concerns). The risk-averse culture of diplomats and European bureaucracies leads them to defer to the states and to prioritize a legal approach to religion. The EEAS pays close attention to being in full agreement with Member States when voicing European positions. It is also extra careful regarding public activities and interactions with civil society that could be perceived as controversial interferences in third states' ↴ affairs. Religion is handled as a security issue, a key to prevent or solve conflicts. As much as possible it is reduced to the repertoire of human rights, interpreted with flexibility to comply with local particularisms. As such, European diplomacy displays, in a hybridized version, the practices of Member States. It does not fundamentally alter the usual policy lines but contributes to putting religion on the agenda and to

addressing it in a multicultural way, that questions its taken-for-granted intertwinement with national identity.

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## Notes

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- 1 See 'Religion and Diplomacy. A Resource of the Transatlantic Policy Network on Religion and Diplomacy', available at <http://ddevme.com/religion-diplomacy/>.
- 2 Many observations in this chapter rely on the findings of an online survey developed with the support of the EEAS headquarters and sent to all 139 EU delegations around the world. Thirty-eight responses were elicited between June and August 2015. In addition, interviews (both by e-mail - see notes 3, 4, 5 and 7 - and 'face to face') were carried out between 2013 and 2016 with European and national diplomats posted in the field and at headquarters. Full anonymity was a requirement for many.
- 3 Email interview with a Finnish official.
- 4 Email interview with a Dutch official.
- 5 Email interview with a German official.
- 6 Interview with two French officials, Washington, 17/4/2005.
- 7 Email interview with a British official.
- 8 Interview with two French officials, Washington, 17/4/2015.
- 9 Interview with a Belgian official, Washington, 17/4/2015.
- 10 Interview with a German official, Washington, 17/4/2015.
- 11 Group interview with members of the Office of Religion and Global Affairs and other services, State Department, Washington, 13/4/2015.

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CHAPTER

## 20 The Conference of European Churches

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### Abstract

This chapter outlines the history and work of the Conference of European Churches (CEC). CEC was founded in the middle of the Cold War in a divided Europe as an instrument promoting dialogue, bridge-building, cooperation, and ecumenical fellowship between churches of Anglican, Orthodox, and Protestant traditions. From its inception, CEC has promoted values of peace, reconciliation, justice, solidarity, and human dignity, and has been engaged in the building of trust and a sense of community in Europe. Through fostering the active engagement of churches in society, CEC has contributed to the discussion on European values and the future of the European project. The final section of the chapter elaborates on the theological foundations framing the churches' action for justice and the common good. Such pursuits are central to the theological principles underpinning a healthy society.

**Keywords:** churches, ecumenical cooperation, bridge-building, dialogue, European project, values, theological foundations

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THE Conference of European Churches (CEC) is a fellowship of 114 churches from the Anglican, Orthodox, and Protestant traditions and covers the whole of Europe. The churches assembled in CEC are committed to overcoming barriers and divisions and to building bridges of mutual respect and cooperation among the churches, peoples, and nations of Europe. CEC does this through two main areas of activity: first by developing relationships among churches, and second by facilitating a joint and credible witness to society, in such a way as to foster reconciliation, peace, respect, and solidarity throughout the continent. This is clearly stated as the key objective of the Conference in its constitution:

In its commitment to Europe as a whole, the vision of the Conference is to promote a community of Churches sharing their spiritual life, seeking reconciliation, strengthening their common witness and service and fostering the unity of the Church. In providing an authentic, credible and socially responsible Christian witness, it will work towards building a humane, social and sustainable Europe at peace with itself and its neighbours in which human rights and solidarity prevail.

CEC was founded in a difficult era, when Europe was in the midst of a Cold War and marked by mistrust and political divisions; it was designed as a platform for sharing and dialogue, and as an instrument of fellowship between churches. The idea and spirit of ‘encounter’ was central, and was integrated into the very structure of the Conference. Even the name, that is, a preference for ‘conference’ rather than ‘council’, was an intentional choice, pointing to a desire for a dynamic and process-oriented mode of operation. Right from the start, the Conference has meant ‘fellowship in service’.

p. 355 The vision of ‘fellowship in service’ has been nurtured by an explicit theological understanding that the Church is not a community for itself, but has a clear role in society. The Church is called to be ‘the salt of the earth’ (Matthew 5:13) and Christians to be ‘doers of the word’ and not just ‘listeners’ (James 1:22). Active witness in society is the way to promote respect for one another, to build fellowship across the continent, and to contribute to the well-being of society. This is a vision of the Church that lives for seven days a week, not simply on Sundays; a Church in which ethics and theology go hand in hand. From this flows a strong ecumenical vision, the core of which is respect for each other within a wide family of Christian churches. Ecumenical endeavours in Europe were strongly stimulated by the founding of the World Council of Churches in 1948. The promotion of unity, which respects the diversity within the Church, while acknowledging and supporting one another, were all sentiments echoed in the launching of CEC, and remain central to the spirit of the organization to this day.

CEC incorporates through its history and ethos the commitment of its member churches to (a) the building of trust and ecumenical cooperation among themselves, and (b) their engagement in society, especially through:

- the internal structure of the organization as a platform for sharing, dialogue, and cooperation;
- the joint promotion of peace, reconciliation, justice, solidarity, mutual respect, and human dignity;
- the active witness to and dialogue with society, as well as with those in decision-making positions, to build a sense of community in Europe and fair relationships with partners from outside.

These tasks, that guide the life and work of CEC and are underpinned by a theological reasoning that feeds the vision of a just society and the common good, also provide the underlying argument and structural frame for this chapter.

## CEC: an opportunity for bridge-building and dialogue

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CEC emerged in 1959 as an embodiment of the churches’ desire to overcome the divisions of a divided continent, and to permit communication and exchange in situations where it was hardly possible. In the early years, the organization existed mainly through annual, or biannual meetings where representatives of churches from the East and West could meet. For Europe these were grim times. The collapse of Hungarian reforms in 1956 and the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961 were pivotal events. CEC provided, however, a platform that enabled churches from the Soviet Bloc (including the Russian Orthodox Church) and those from Western Europe to find a common language and grow in confidence in their relationships.

p. 356 Even in its early years, CEC was far more than a space for platitudes or pleasantries. Right from the outset, CEC has enabled both active engagement in society, furthering the values of peace, justice, solidarity and human dignity, and the contribution of churches and ecumenical organizations to postwar reconciliation. The 1962 General Assembly elaborated a series of suggestions on how the churches should be involved in the world around them. On the agenda were items such as women’s concerns, migration, responses to

developments in politics, and involvement in social issues. Significantly, it was in this period that youth and lay people were increasingly recognized as part of the church family. The event offered to CEC members a forum, in which the responsibility of the churches in helping to overcome political, religious, and socio-economic divisions as well as in challenging the ideological rifts between East and West, was clearly spelled out (Gurney, 1999: 16).

Commitment and creativity are hallmarks of the early years of the Conference. For example, the 1964 General Assembly was supposed to take place in Denmark. Visa difficulties, however, forced a change of plan. Delegates from the German Democratic Republic (GDR) were denied permission to travel to a NATO Member State, and so the assembly took place on a chartered ship cruising along the international boundary between Sweden and Denmark. This allowed the assembly to go ahead with GDR delegates, without upsetting the political sensitivities of the host country. The assembly at sea was also marked by the presence for the first time of church delegations from other continents: the Americas and the Middle East. Their inclusion signalled the clear wish that CEC look beyond Europe to Europe's place in the world.

Hopes for new opportunities in improving relations between East and West were introduced in Europe through the Pan-European Helsinki Agreement of 1975. This opened the way for an intensive scrutiny of the concept of human rights and their violations. In this context CEC did useful work in enhancing dialogue and improving relations between both parts of Europe (Hogebrink, 2015: 27).

An important element in CEC's history is its engagement with the Roman Catholic Church. The first ecumenical meeting under the joint auspices of CEC and the Council of the Bishops' Conferences in Europe (CCEE) took place in 1978 in Chantilly, near Paris. This meeting marked a new point in the relationship between the Anglican, Orthodox, and Protestant churches grouped under the banner of CEC, and the Roman Catholic Church, represented by CCEE. The meeting was even noted by the secular press, including *Le Monde*, which reported, 'This "summit meeting" in Chantilly may rightly be described as "historic" since it was in fact the first time that leaders of the churches of both East and West had met together on a basis of partnership' (Gurney, 1999: 28). The relationship with the Roman Catholic Church was further developed through three European Ecumenical Assemblies: Basel (1989), Graz (1997), and Sibiu (2007), along with a number of other events. Joint work and the adoption of the *Charta Oecumenica*, finalized in 2001, marked growing trust and cooperation between both organizations.

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The post-war situation in Europe had been characterized not only by the Iron Curtain that partitioned the continent, but also by the very different developments on either side. Living under the yoke of political totalitarianism became a reality for a large part of Europe. This influenced the churches in the countries of the Communist bloc to such an extent that it was impossible for them to witness to their faith as they would have wished. In Western Europe, conversely, efforts in the material rebuilding of the continent were accompanied by new and dynamic political developments. Here, essential steps were taken aimed at reconciling former enemies. These included efforts by political leaders, notably Robert Schuman (1886–1963), Konrad Adenauer, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany (1949–63), Alcide de Gasperi, Prime Minister of Italy (1945–53) and others, who were guided by the vision of a lasting peace and meaningful reconciliation. The formation of transnational institutions followed. Although economic arguments played a pivotal role in these arrangements, economic integration was not an aim in itself, as clearly stated by the founding fathers of this process. The first step—putting the coal and steel industries of France and Germany under common authority—was a move that had stretched beyond the realm of economics. Above all, this was a confidence-building measure, permitting in the subsequent years a robust follow-up, specifically the development of space for the building of trust and for establishing the core values of the project: peace, reconciliation, freedom, solidarity, and justice. These goals went beyond—well beyond—the satisfaction of basic needs, material well-being, and prosperity.

The acknowledgement of core values and a commitment to them has made the European project from its inception a value-based project. Obviously, such commitments do not make integration in Europe a Christian project. They do, however, open a space for a dialogue about how these values can be made operative in daily life. The churches, moreover, were fully committed to participating in this dialogue.

The human dimension of the project made the early stages of European integration an attractive endeavour beyond the corridors of professional politics. This was made very explicit by Jean Monnet (1888–1979), another founding father of European integration and architect of the Schuman Declaration, in his words: ‘we are uniting a people’. The phrase: ‘Nous ne coalisons pas des États, nous unissons des hommes,’ had already appeared in 1952 (see for example, Jean Monnet, 1976). The idea was then reflected in the Preamble of the Treaty of Rome (1957) that established the European Economic Community. The first objective of the process was, as the preamble says, ‘an ever-closer union among the European peoples’. The phrase has remained in all new treaties since. Monnet’s human dimension, however, was not widely followed and not long after the initial period of European integration, debates started to focus on the political and economic instruments. The idea of a Europe of the people, where people meet and feel at home and have a sense of belonging to a community was pushed aside. Nevertheless, it remained for the churches an entry point for developing ways to make the integration process acceptable. The task, moreover, belonged especially to the ecumenical organizations created for this purpose: that is to monitor and express the churches’ concerns, and—if needed—to challenge the gradually developing policies at the European level. Articulating the churches’ societal responsibilities was the key task, through which they expressed their concerns as well as their hopes, contributing meaningfully to the process of European integration.

p. 358 The history of structured dialogue between European politics and the churches goes back to the 1960s and to the Western European churches’ decision to monitor closely the political developments following the Schuman Declaration. The human dimension, the openness of politics to dialogue with citizens as well as with confessional and non-confessional organizations, has been at the centre of these efforts. Key steps along the way included the formation of the Ecumenical Centre in Brussels in February 1965 and, following different organizational groupings, the establishment of the Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society in the European Communities (ECCSEC) in 1979. This body, which was later renamed the European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society (EECCS) and brought together churches and ecumenical councils from Western Europe, was most visibly identified with these tasks (Reuter, 2002; Leustean, 2014; Burton, 2015). The founding of COMECE (Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Union), a Roman Catholic counterpart and the partner of EECCS, followed in 1980.

The Cold War detached both the people and the churches in the Communist Bloc from the developing European institutions. The political heirs in these countries did not allow anything of this kind. Given these circumstances, and if CEC wanted to pursue its vision of trust-building and forging relationships between both parts of the continent, it had to distance itself from these institutions. This resulted in the separate and parallel developments of CEC and EECCS. Contacts were maintained, nevertheless, and collaboration between both organizations advanced. This situation lasted until the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989.

The 1990s were characterized by the gradual involvement of churches from post-communist countries in the work of EECCS, and the deepening of cooperation between CEC and EECCS. The first ecumenical councils of churches from post-communist Europe (Slovakia and Hungary) joined EECCS in 1995. The unification of both organizations, CEC and EECCS was completed in 1998. Since then, the mandate of the former EECCS has been continued within CEC as the Church and Society Commission.

## Does Europe need a soul? What kind of future do we want in Europe?

Over the decades, ecumenical work in Europe has developed along two parallel tracks: building bridges among the churches and developing a dialogue with politics at the European level. The latter has included discussion on the purpose of integration, the values related to this project, as well as the churches' position on a growing number of policy issues—notably development, Europe's responsibility towards other parts of the world, and social policies.

p. 359 The values underpinning the integration process in Europe, its aims and different qualities, played a vital role in the ecumenical agenda. Being active in society, not fearing ↪ a vision worthy of sacrifices, formulating and implementing mutually acknowledged values, cooperation and respectful community have all been central to the theological arguments for church engagement. An important part of this engagement was the vision of a common European home, a phrase coined in post-Cold War politics, but which found considerable resonance in church settings. The idea of a common European home played a significant role in the European Ecumenical Assembly, jointly organized by CEC and CCEE in Basel in the spring of 1989. Although this took place before the dramatic changes that subverted many clichés that had shaped the continent for a long time, the atmosphere was already ripe for a vision considered by many to be beyond credible imagination. In Basel, CEC General Secretary Jean Fischer outlined a vision for the continent that the churches should be ready to embrace. The European home became a metaphor for the churches' engagement for the coming decades, and was about more than overcoming political barriers and disparities. Rather, a European home, in Fischer's words, is:

an open house, a haven of welcome and hospitality, without discrimination; a house in which no one would be afraid to speak the truth, in which daily bread would be shared among all, and, finally, a house in which dialogue and not violence prevailed in the resolution of conflicts. It would be a house open towards the world, neither a ghetto, nor Euro-centric, a house of solidarity with humankind.

(Gurney, 1999: 39)

The optimistic atmosphere of the 1990s yielded opportunities for a fruitful dialogue between churches and European politics. It was not only the vision of the churches that was appealing. In November 1990 a delegation of Protestant and Anglican church leaders met with the delegation of the European Commission, including President Jacques Delors. It was in that meeting, that the President appealed to the churches to contribute to 'the heart and soul of Europe'. What was the reason for this appeal? In Delors' vision the single market would soon be completed, and with the free movement of goods, services, people, and capital will provide unprecedented opportunities for new jobs and economic growth. In his words: 'The "technocrats" had done their work and they had done it well'. This, however, was not the end of the road. The challenge, as he spelled it out, was: 'how to proceed from there?' In order to move forwards, he underlined: 'we need heart and soul. If in the next ten years we haven't managed to give a soul to Europe, to give it spirituality and meaning, the game will be up' (Hogebrink, 2015: 11ff).

Delors' search for a new meaning for Europe was inspired by the success of the integration process within the European Community and the new political opportunities arising from the collapse of Eastern European totalitarianism. After the technocrats, Europe needed people of culture, scientists, and also the churches. For the European Community to become a real *community*—not only a market—required a new *sense of belonging*, which included the rediscovering of solidarity in society.

p. 360 Delors' call for a soul for Europe found a response in the activities of numerous churches and in the institutional support of the European Commission. In 1994, it became a working programme of the European Commission under the title *A Soul for* ↪ *Europe: Ethics and Spirituality*. The programme offered a



unique platform for inter-faith cooperation, including the member churches of EECCS, the Roman Catholic Church through the participation of COMECE, and other faith communities including Muslims and Jews, as well as the European Humanist Federation. The aim was to promote reflection about the spiritual and ethical meaning of building a new Europe and to bring the specific contributions of churches, religions, and faith-based associations to the process. The coordination of the programme and its secretariat were entrusted to EECCS. A significant number of projects received financial support over the years. In 1998 the programme was listed in the budget of the European Parliament. All in all, a remarkable step that illustrates mutually beneficial cooperation between institutional politics at the European level and faith communities (Reuter, 2002: 66–7).

Developments in the European Community have been closely monitored by the churches. Efforts to contribute to *heart and soul of Europe* have been accompanied by comments and observations linked to major political processes, expressing the churches' concerns in relation to their values. These values have been stated on repeated occasions and, in the churches' understanding, need to underpin the European process.

In the second half of the 1990s, it became clear that the European Community needed to revise its internal structures to enable a more effective response to several challenges. These included: the repeatedly questioned democratic deficit, the lack of legitimacy in the Union's decision-making structure, and the need to prepare itself for the integration of a growing number of countries from the former Communist bloc, who were expressing an ambition to join.

The sixth intergovernmental conference of the European Union started in 1996. In its statement expressing the churches' reaction to the conference, EECCS took the opportunity to highlight what, in the churches' view, should be the aim of the process. It is noteworthy that the statement acknowledges not just the fact that the Union is facing growing challenges, but highlights the need to recapture the Union's vision. 'The future of the European Union is more than a free trade zone', stated EECCS (European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society, 1995: 2). The document highlights that the vision of the Union must be shared and 'acceptable' for Union citizens and adds: 'the question of democracy must be a central aspect of the Union's structures. [ ... ] Democracy does not, however, stop at citizens being able to vote every five years. They must be able to see why decisions are made' (European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society, 1995: 2). Thus the key for a proper functioning of the Union must be the principle of subsidiarity that goes hand in hand with the practical implementation of participative democracy and efforts to avoid social exclusion.

All this reasoning is based on the underlying question: why do churches feel the need to be engaged in this discussion and how does a vision for Europe's future relate to the basic principles of Christian theology? In responding to this question, the document emphasizes that:

churches are faced with the challenge of saying how they will apply their theological principles to questions about the future of the European Union. ... The position which can be derived from Scripture and the tradition of the church and which accords with experience can be summarized by saying that the Christian is concerned about the individual person, living in community, formed by historic experience and with a social responsibility both in the present and for the future.

(European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society, 1995: 6)

With the unification of CEC and EECCS, the work of the enlarged Conference of European Churches took on new dimensions relating to social ethics and the dialogue with politics. Following the work of the former EECCS, the Church and Society Commission received a mandate, which included work on theological and ethical reflections relating to the churches' presence in society, raising concerns about the European process, and facilitating a dialogue with political institutions, notably the EU and Council of Europe. The deepening engagement of the churches from post-Communist countries, and a new political climate in the



West characterized by EU openness to membership from central and Eastern Europe, inspired the next steps in the discussion on the future of the European project—now with a broader participation than ever before.

## Churches in the European political process

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The first Assembly of CEC following the integration with EECCS took place in 2003 in Trondheim, Norway. The question of Europe, its future, and the responsibility of churches in raising their concerns relating to the European integration process were strongly present in Assembly discussions. They were, obviously, not the only concerns raised, but the Assembly offered an opportunity to state clearly the positive value of the project and to express confidence that the churches were able to contribute to it in a constructive way. In the words of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who delivered an opening speech to the Assembly, ‘Our task is not easy one ... how shall we succeed in bearing effective witness? How shall we convey to contemporary Europe a message that is humble yet prophetic, kenotic yet challenging?’ In particular, the Ecumenical Patriarch underlined that:

If we are to speak to Europe a word of healing and reconciliation, then, that word has to be God’s word and not our own. What, as Christian communities, we have to offer to the world is not a programme, not an ideology, but a person. Saving truth is not a series of propositions but a living person.

(Bartholomew, 2004: 14ff)

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The question of the churches’ engagement in twenty-first-century society had, however, been resonating in discussions for a considerable time before the Assembly. A particular event focusing on this theme, entitled ‘Europe Days’, was organized by ↵ CEC in October 2000 in Iași, Romania. The event offered space for a fruitful encounter between representatives of the churches and of European politics and an opportunity for the churches to listen to expectations about their social action from the point of view of those engaged in active politics. The thoughts of Theo Junker, the then director of the office of the European Parliament, serve as an example in offering a vision, which still has traction today. In Junker’s view, there is a clear role for the churches in the political development of Europe. This role is prophetic rather than clerical and implies not only being critical of authorities but confronting them with their responsibilities when necessary. To that task, should be added an ethical function, which is evangelical rather than moralistic in the sense ‘that it is inspired by him who told the parables of the Gospel’. Both dimensions, finally, should be accompanied by a pastoral and diaconal function on the one hand and a forward planning function on the other (see Pavlovic and Gurney, 2000: 12, for the full quotation from Juncker).

CEC aimed to follow this vision as the years progressed. This was accomplished by encouraging its member churches to take an active role in society; in sharing information both within its constituency and with partners outside; in taking steps to enable better mutual knowledge and respect; in demonstrating solidarity among the churches; and in facilitating the dialogue with the European political institutions. CEC, together with its partner organization COMECE, has played a role in facilitating the dialogue of churches with the European political institutions under the framework of an open, regular, and transparent dialogue to which the EU is committed by Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).<sup>1</sup> In contributing to this dialogue over the years CEC has highlighted the responsibility of churches to be engaged in society, arguing that the churches’ word and action have to be treated as a unity, not as separate entities (Conference of European Churches, 2009: 17).

The challenges confronting Europe in recent years provide a new impulse for these considerations: the need to address the continuing democratic deficit in the EU; the need for new mechanisms enabling efficient cooperation among a growing number of Member States; enlargement fatigue versus the ambitions of a

number of countries to join; migrations flows; and an unprecedented challenge of disintegration following the decision of one its Member States to leave the Union.

p. 363 With this in mind, CEC launched an intensive consultation on the Future of Europe in 2016. The consultation process included regional events in four different parts of the continent, a number of national events, and contributions from individual churches; it culminated at the 2018 Novi Sad General Assembly of the Conference of European Churches. An ambition of the consultation was not only to explore how churches should react to new challenges, but at the same time to respond to the following question: does theology have something to contribute to the current discourse on Europe?

Archbishop Emeritus Anders Wejryd of the Church of Sweden expressed the feelings of many in responding to this question with an emphatic 'yes'. This, however, has to be accompanied by a necessary qualification. In this respect, Archbishop Wejryd was very clear and called for theology which is related to life—that is theology which is both relevant and imbued with Christian identity. In his words:

Through faith we dare think that the weak should be protected, the criminal given a second chance, the wealth shared, the refugee welcomed, the world supposed to be stewarded, not owned and worn out by us. If we, as Christians and churches don't speak out on this, we are guilty of treason. We are then keeping something hidden from Europe.

(Wejryd, 2017: 2)

In a similar way the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, in his input to the 2018 CEC General Assembly, pondered the reaction of the Church to the threats of war, terrorism, economic crises, individualism, and the indifference that Europe is facing, seeing these as the main challenges of our time. He underlined: 'the Church is first to seek to be a holy community, based in order, in mutual love, in humility, service and hospitality. That all sounds good and harmless, but it is in fact something that runs directly contrary to much of what we see going on in Europe today' (Welby, 2018: 2). Along with that goes the second task, which according to the Archbishop, is the need to ensure that the Church's presence and witness be 'more powerful in its unity than the centrifugal forces within Europe are powerful in their fractures' (Welby, 2018: 2). In turning his attention to the role of ecumenical cooperation in this process, the Archbishop stressed: 'The gift of reconciliation must call the church to unity ... Let us be the peace makers of Europe' (Welby, 2018: 3). The Church, Archbishop Welby continued, is called to reflect the concrete situations of everyday life into which it must bring witness, hospitality, and service. It was in this context that he reflected on the current and very specific situation facing Europe as it anticipated Brexit, stressing however that: 'The EU has been the greatest dream realized for human beings since the fall of the Western Roman Empire. It has brought peace, prosperity, compassion for the poor and weak, purpose for the aspirational and hope for all its people' (Welby, 2018: 3). A notable vision from a church leader of the nation that less than two years later formally left the Union.

Visions should always be checked against reality. There are both challenges and opportunities facing Europe. Too many people and countries face uncertainty. Achievements of which Europe has been proud, have not always been accessible to everyone. Political, financial, economic, and social crises, conflicts and disasters, the pace of technological advancement, environmental changes, and changing demographics contribute to anxieties both in the present and for the future.

p. 364 An effective consultation always goes in two directions: presenting and listening, attending and witnessing. The consultation on the Future of Europe enabled CEC to listen to worries and problems not from a distance, but in encounters with those who are directly affected. Outcomes of the process articulated a wish to strengthen the engagement of churches in society and in dialogue with politics. Messages emerged expressing fears and frustrations, especially in the southern and eastern parts of the continent. Lessons were learned by listening to those who faced everyday hardships caused by the impact of economic

difficulties, and who expressed an evident lack of hope. This was often formulated in sharp words: Europe has forgotten us. These experiences must not be overlooked. In short, in restating its vision, CEC has repeatedly underlined that Europe is, as expressed in the words of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in the 2018 General Assembly: ‘a project based on solidarity, freedom, justice and peace, it is not an economic association operating on the basis of the principle that the economy is a law unto itself’ (Bartholomew, 2018: 2).

In this way, there is a need for an open and engaged exchange with participation from politics, economy, science, academia, and civil society. Churches, religions, and faith communities may have insights able to make such a consultation effective. In the words of Archbishop Wejryd: ‘Europe needs deep personal and vivid talks about what values do we want to lift up. What is really important for us? What changes of priorities are we ready to make in order to honour these values and wishes?’ (Wejryd, 2017: 3). To which he adds: ‘Openness and fullness can thrive only in tensions. Maybe this knowledge is something which theology and church should bring to the European public’ (Wejryd, 2017: 3).

In working jointly on a vision for Europe, the first lesson for the CEC consultation was to take the diversity of the continent seriously. This is not necessarily limited to linguistic diversity. Europe is rich in its diverse cultures, lifestyles, and living conditions, as well as in ways of participating in communal life. These differences should be valued not as an obstacle, but as a shared richness. Despite their diversity, the contributions to the consultation underlined three key terms—building community, offering service, witnessing in society—that, together, shape the churches’ wish for a future in Europe, as well as their contribution to it. This is where CEC and its member churches see their role.

At the same time, it is clear that the role of Christianity has changed profoundly in many European societies and that religious pluralism both within and beyond Christianity has been increasing. Nevertheless, churches and faith communities are an important part of the social and political fabric of Europe. It is the self-understanding of CEC that the churches’ commitment to Europe (and its vision for the continent through community, service, and witness), goes hand in hand with strengthening both ecumenical action and a common voice through mutual cooperation, fellowship, and respect. Ecumenism and working for the unity of the churches is one of the greatest opportunities of the current moment. Ecumenical cooperation, moreover, constitutes a constructive contribution to the building of a Europe of peace and mutual respect.

## Justice and the common good

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Highlighting efforts for community building, service, and witness as the framework for meaningful action by the churches raises a necessary question about the content of this witness. How can this be expressed in acceptable and understandable language both inside and outside the churches’ setting and in such a way as to contribute to a discourse much needed in modern Europe? Key in this regard is the theological frame offering the incentives for the churches’ actions on justice and the common good. The pursuit of these qualities is central to the principles on which a healthy society is formed.

In responding to this task history offers an important lesson. St Augustine (354–430) may be of help even now. Along with language, he offers a concept that is well worth considering. Augustine made clear that a healthy society, wanting to be called society or fellowship, needs to be a just society. He saw the notion of justice as the dominant feature for maintaining the cohesion of any political and social body wanting to be called society. Justice is a key value in creating a framework in which society may reasonably act, and in reality, it is the only way in which society can live and survive. Justice is the premise upon which society is built. It cannot be created by the market, or any other kind of human interaction, but only through mutual respect and the acknowledgment of each other’s gifts, cultures, and histories. In elaborating the ways in which justice needs to become operative in society, St Augustine emphasized that what he is describing is a

very specific understanding of this term. He is talking about a justice that is not imposed by legal instruments, but is organically evolving. Justice is not put into place through post-facto enforcement of punishment or reward, nor a restoration of something that has been lost or damaged in the past, but is a form of organic *ex ante* justice. This, for him, is a perception of a general nature. 'No commonwealth could be either governed or endure if justice did not dominate' (St Augustine, 1958: 72ff).

Understandings such as this have repercussions for the situation in Europe today, including a number of very specific challenges that have to be faced. In responding to these challenges, the Church needs to keep in focus particular concepts developed by the Apostle Paul and his use of the term *ecclesia* as an expression describing a political community—seeing this as a parallel reality challenging the world outside, a community based on the values expressed in the gospel, and charged with witnessing to this reality in the wider society. (For the use of the term *ecclesia* in letters of Paul to the Thessalonians, 1 Thessalonians 2:14 and 2 Thessalonians 1:4, see Jenson, 1999: 204.)

p. 366 Justice and especially *ex ante* justice is the key value that deserves to be examined in its many forms in the context of everyday life. Not as a retrospective glance at the early church, but as a reality check in the grassroots communities of the twenty-first century, as well as in the context of European policies. This includes the challenges of *social justice*, which embrace the need to address persistent inequalities and the growing gap between wealth and poverty as these become a daily reality for individuals as well as states. Equally important are *intergenerational justice* (the increasing challenges for future generations), and *ecological and climate justice* (the framework for debates on global warming, climate change, loss of biodiversity, and the plundering of natural resources). At this point it is important to recall not only the challenges linked to specific European policies but to include challenges of a broader nature as well: growing divisions in society, political opportunism and populism, the preference for short-term political gains over long-term perspectives, and so on.

It was with this perception in mind that CEC highlighted the following in its 2016 publication 'Beyond Prosperity': 'We call for reinforcement of a narrative of the European common good and a common narrative on the servicing role of the economy' (Pavlovic, 2017: 54). In short, 'economic order and economic functioning must serve the fulfilment of human needs and ends, and the flourishing of human beings as they live out their calling' (Pavlovic, 2017: 65). Thus, the current situation needs to be seen from an historical perspective, as a check against the vision that prompted the efforts for European integration in the first place. In the view of CEC, the original vision must neither be forgotten, nor pushed aside. In the publication, as indeed on multiple occasions, CEC has stressed that: 'Since its initiation, the primary driving force for building up the EU has been the achievement of goals that reach beyond economic cooperation.' However, in the course of the development of the EU over several decades: 'Economic targets aiming at GDP growth, efforts to increase competition and enlarge market areas have become central to the dominant mainstream policy. This often comes at the expense of human, social and natural capital, and leads to the breakdown of social cohesion as currently witnessed across Europe and beyond.' With respect to the current situation in Europe and the challenges we have to face, CEC underlines that: 'There is a need for reflection about how to make our policies and our politics more humane and compassionate' (Pavlovic, 2017: 47ff).

# Conclusion

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Churches are part of a pluralistic society and present their specific concerns, while upholding the values of mutual respect between different societal, religious, and faith communities. In an effort to contribute to public discussion, CEC member churches underline the importance of ecumenical work, in which the Christian faith is presented by churches with different histories and sometimes with different socio-ethical consequences. The task of fighting for a society in which freedom and justice are not in conflict but are pursued at the same time and with the same energy has not yet reached its end. The impacts of the economic crises of the previous decade, which some parts of the continent have still not overcome, remind us of this.

In this respect it is the role and responsibility of the churches to recall that politics should not be reduced to a fight to the death for limited interests among particular parties, but a balancing act, having in mind the well-being of society as a whole. The role of churches, religions, and faith-based organizations is indispensable for a healthy society. Over the last sixty years, CEC has served as a forum for dialogue, fostering fellowship, and providing a space for the churches that are contributing to this task.

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## Notes

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- 1 The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Official Journal of the European Union. 2008. Brussels. Art.17/3: 'Recognizing their identity and their specific contribution, the Union shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with these churches and organizations', available at [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:41f89a28-1fc6-4c92-b1c8-03327d1b1ecc.0007.02/DOC\\_1&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:41f89a28-1fc6-4c92-b1c8-03327d1b1ecc.0007.02/DOC_1&format=PDF).

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CHAPTER

## 21 The Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE)

Frank Turner

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### Abstract

This chapter describes the work of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE), its evolving relationship with central institutions of the European Union, and with its partners in the Catholic world. The chapter then considers particular challenges, both intrinsic (arising from the character of COMECE itself) and extrinsic (focusing on those entailed by the EU's culture of secularity). For example, the Treaty of Lisbon assures religious organizations, like non-religious ones, both access to and dialogue with EU institutions. COMECE's advocacy, however, is necessarily grounded in Catholic beliefs and principles, in particular those of Catholic social thought. Such foundational principles cannot be coherently articulated in the language of secularity alone.

**Keywords:** COMECE, European Union, Treaty of Lisbon, Catholic social thought, advocacy, secularity

**Subject:** History of Religion, Religion

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THE chapter starts by describing the mission of COMECE, informing and representing its constituent episcopal conferences of the European Union (EU), and maintaining appropriate structures of dialogue with the EU institutions and the civil society and ecclesiastical bodies active in the EU environment. A summary is given of COMECE's history and development, and of its various instruments of work. Particular attention is paid to the formal structures of dialogue which relate COMECE, among other religious bodies, to the EU, notably those mandated by the Treaty of Lisbon: both their effectiveness and their limitations are assessed.

The chapter then recounts some key concerns of the Catholic Church as a whole, as embodied in papal interventions on the EU, in COMECE's own congresses, and in some of COMECE's principal publications: those on the ethical dimensions of the EU, on the EU's commitment to solidarity in the light of Catholic social thought, on climate change, and on certain key themes of ecclesiastical advocacy at the EU, such as the defence of the poor and marginalized, especially refugees and migrants.

Two types of challenges are then considered: those of the specific environment in which COMECE operates; and those which derive from the divergent interests and concerns of COMECE's own members. The former



challenge arises because it is not easy to bring an explicitly transcendent, long-term, and distinctively religious perspective to bear on a political environment that demands short-term effectiveness; and on organizations which cannot function, and politicians who cannot survive professionally, without maintaining popular support. The challenge of operating in a specifically <sup>1</sup> and legitimately secular milieu is also noted—a milieu in which ecclesiastical concepts and language tend to be rejected as inappropriate. In the latter category are the internal challenges deriving from the diverse historical experience of the Member States, and of the Church’s representatives in those states. For example, the universal church finds itself confronting national and sometimes nationalistic streams of thought that are present even in episcopal conferences, themselves national.

A brief conclusion argues that COMECE, on behalf of the EU’s Catholic episcopal conferences, has a double mandate: to support the values of solidarity and community in an EU where these values are increasingly attacked; and no less, to embody those same principles in the Church’s collective life.

## COMECE’s mission

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COMECE comprises bishops delegated by the Catholic Bishops’ Conferences of the twenty-seven Member States of the EU. Ecclesiastical and political jurisdictions do not always coincide. A single bishop represents Denmark, Sweden, and Finland whereas, until 2020, the United Kingdom was represented by one bishop of the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, and by another from that of Scotland: the ecclesiastical affairs of Northern Ireland, itself within the UK, are conducted by the Bishops’ Conference of Ireland.

The specific mission of COMECE is to maintain a dialogue with the EU’s political institutions and personnel, and to enable the Catholic episcopal conferences of the EU to work collegially and in union, addressing effectively EU political issues of concern to the Church. The mission has a double aspect: to inform the episcopal conferences about the EU, and in turn to represent to the EU the concerns and convictions of the bishops. It is both an information service to the bishops and an organ of the bishops. As will be seen, this dual mission embodies inherent tensions.

The mission’s boundaries are defined by the EU’s own competences. On the one hand, the mandate to cover pastoral issues pertaining to the *whole* continent of Europe rests with COMECE’s sister organization, the Council of the Bishops’ Conferences of Europe (CCEE). Matters affecting the Church lying within the competence of the EU’s individual Member States (for example what counts legally as ‘marriage’) are treated by the bishops’ conference concerned, though COMECE might well assist with information.

Representing Catholic teaching and its moral implications to European politics may take the form of advocacy. COMECE is not a ‘Catholic lobby’ (amid a multitude of Brussels lobbies) promoting the interests of the Church. The Church’s political concern is the common good, though the Church will sometimes have a distinctive vision of that good. Similarly, COMECE’s work concerns principles, not opinions, and policy recommendations must rest on clear foundations, though the boundaries of subjectivity and objectivity are never easily navigated.

## History

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The Holy See closely followed the foundation and development of the European institutions from their origin in the European Coal and Steel Community, following the Schuman Declaration of 1950. Pope Pius XII (1939–58) considered the 1957 Treaty of Rome as ‘the most important and significant event in the modern history of the Eternal City’. COMECE itself, however, was founded only in March 1980, one member representing each episcopal conference of the then nine Member States.

There were antecedent institutions. An office of the Society of Jesus in Strasbourg was opened in 1956 under the title Office catholique d'information sur les problèmes de l'Europe (OCIPE), later renamed The Jesuit European Social Centre (JESC). OCIPE offered an information service to the wider Church, without the mandate of representing the Holy See. Likewise, from 1976 to 1980 the Church was served by the *Service d'information pastorale européenne catholique*, SIPECA. From 1970, the Apostolic Nuncio in Brussels (that is, to the States of Belgium and Luxembourg and to the corresponding bishops' conference) was accredited to the European Community; in 1995 a separate Nuncio was appointed specifically to relate to the EU.

Since 1980, COMECE has grown as the EU itself has grown. One notable landmark was the year 2004, when the EU's ten new Member States included eight countries formerly of the Communist bloc: two other such states, Bulgaria and Romania, followed in 2007, as well as Croatia in 2013. Significantly, therefore, the EU now integrates what Pope John Paul II called 'the two lungs of Europe'. These 'two lungs', significantly, embody divergent experiences of modern Europe. In 1945, what appeared to Western Europe as liberation appeared to the East as a new external oppression. Ecclesiastically, COMECE now integrated a 'Western' Church, more or less free to pursue its mission (although threatened with an increasing sense of its societal irrelevance) and an 'Eastern' Church in which literal martyrdom had recently been far from rare, and in which state hostility was often vicious. This diversity of heritage, and therefore of self-understanding, marks COMECE today.

COMECE's gradually increasing recognition from the European institutions was facilitated by a notable continuity in its leadership. For example, Bishop Josef Homeyer of Hildesheim, Germany, served as president from 1993 to 2006, and Monsignor Noël Treanor (later to become Bishop of Down and Connor) as General Secretary from 1993 to 2008. At the time of writing (2020), COMECE's President is Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, S.J., Archbishop of Luxembourg, and its General Secretary is Father Manuel Enrique Barrios Prieto.

## Instruments of work

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The bishops of COMECE meet in Plenary Assembly twice a year, to determine priorities and set the work programme. An executive group of the Assembly is known as the Standing Committee. There is a permanent secretariat in Brussels, inhabiting the complex political environment of the EU, which arranges meetings with EU personnel and provides or commissions expert briefings. COMECE has a number of 'commissions' (chaired by a bishop-delegate) and 'working groups' (comprised of experts mandated by the national bishops' conferences and other relevant Catholic organizations). Short-term groups function as and when necessary. The relative priority accorded any given topic depends partly on the central concerns of the Church itself, partly on the external political environment. For example, in May 2008 COMECE discussed at length the then newsworthy issue of the visibility of religion in the public space: the mosque, the crucifix, and the various forms of Islamic dress.

At the time of writing, the following semi-permanent groups are active. A Commission on Social Affairs considers the wider social policy of the EU, such as labour and employment, youth policy, education and training, and the EU's fundamental 'four freedoms' — the movement of people, capital, goods, and services. A Commission on Legal Affairs treats legal matters with a direct impact on the work of the Church in the EU: legislation on fundamental rights, work, data protection, church-state relationships, and so on. The Commission on the External Relations of the European Union deals with policy and debate around the EU's relationships with third countries (in and beyond Europe) and with international organizations. There are two working groups, on Migration and Asylum, and on Ethics: the latter contributes to EU debate and policy making in the areas of research, innovation, and health care.

COMECE also publishes a monthly journal, *EuropeInfos*. Initially the journal was printed: it later appeared in simultaneous versions—printed and online—and now is exclusively published online. The journal is written in partnership with the Jesuit office JESC, often with external contributors. Articles are intended to inform, without necessarily representing, the collective positions of COMECE or JESC.

## Constitutive relationships with the EU itself

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COMECE's primary and fundamental relationship is that with the EU itself, which maintains both formal and informal contacts with religious leaders. The churches are considered both as one element among others of EU civil society, and (according to the Lisbon Treaty) in their distinctive life as religious bodies.

COMECE's seminars might well be attended by senior EU officials and parliamentarians. For example, in 2016 COMECE's plenary assembly considered Europe's 'vocation to promote peace in the world'. Guest speakers included the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini. Annual 'summits' take place between leaders of the EU institutions and religious leaders. Since the EU would find it invidious to select the Catholic (or other religious) partners for such events, these partners are in practice invited by COMECE, which therefore finds itself to be the arbiter of which organizations are deemed to be relevant ↵ and authentically Catholic. Similarly, COMECE regularly takes part in the European Commission's own consultations and, with its ecumenical partners, will typically meet governments as they assume the presidency of the European Council.

One particular dialogue is that mandated by Article 17 of the 2009 Lisbon Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. COMECE's assessment of this dialogue (May 2010) parsed its key requirements—that it be 'open, transparent and regular'. The term 'open' implies the willingness of the EU institutions to work with citizens, including the churches and other religious communities, towards involvement in the EU's lawmaking and governance; secondly, *all* fields within the EU's competence ought in principle to come within the scope of the dialogue; thirdly, the dialogue should be 'sincere' and allow for the critical engagement of all parties. The term 'transparent' means that everyone should have the right to know, at any time, who are the dialogue's partners, and what are its objectives and results. 'Regular' meetings are not necessarily 'frequent', but the overall structure of dialogue should go beyond sporadic or merely *ad hoc* meetings.

Apparent success in these proposals would commit COMECE to a workload beyond its capacity. The EU institutions themselves stress that they are committed by the Lisbon Treaty to treat faith communities with parity, with one another and collectively over against non-religious partners. In practice, everyone knows that dialogues demanding from the EU excessive time and resources would quickly become detached from central policy-making. Nevertheless, church institutions in Brussels enjoy a more systematic access to the leadership of the EU itself than they do in many or most of the Member States. The French model of *laïcité*, for example, entails a formal separation between state and church, seemingly rigid but historically explicable in terms of the historical conflict between a strong state and a previously dominant Catholic Church (Baujard, 2016: 19). In other Member States, access to government may be dominated by a single church, as by the Orthodox Church in Romania, Bulgaria, or Greece, or the Catholic Church in Slovakia.

The current system represents a rapid historical shift. In his address of 2002 to the Corps of Diplomats to the Holy See, Pope John Paul II (1978–2005) had lamented that the Church had been excluded from participation in discussing the projected EU constitution. He had proposed the insertion of an additional clause in the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997), that the EU 'must maintain a dialogue with faith communities that was "open, transparent and regular"'. In the event, that Constitution never entered into force, being rejected in 2005 by France and the Netherlands. But after the entry in 2004 and 2007 of countries with

models of church–state relationship very different from that of France, the pope’s proposal eventually found its way into the Treaty of Lisbon.

## Constitutive relationships with others

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COMECE works with a range of partners in Brussels, both within the Roman Catholic Church and within the broader Christian environment. The Holy See’s representation ↵ to the EU has already been noted. The Nuncio attends COMECE’s plenary assemblies twice a year, as well as regular meetings of the Standing Committee, and COMECE’s Standing Committee itself meets the Holy See’s Secretariat of State annually in Rome.

As earlier indicated, COMECE has a Catholic sister organization, the Council of Bishops’ Conferences in Europe (CCEE). CCEE’s thirty-nine members are drawn from all the countries of Europe, not merely those within the EU. Its statutes of 1995 characterize CCEE as an organ of communion serving the ‘custody of the good of the Church’. In practice, CCEE is concerned primarily with pastoral life and cultural affairs, rather than with politics, economics, and inter-state relations.

In addition, a number of Catholic religious congregations are or have been active in the EU environment. The early role of the Society of Jesus has been mentioned. Today, as well as JESC, the Jesuits maintain a pastoral work amid the EU institutions, the ‘Chapel of the Resurrection’. The Dominicans (the Order of Preachers) ran for some years a centre for cultural analysis in Brussels, named ‘Espaces’, which is no longer active. The Salesian Brothers of Don Bosco, with their special concern for youth, closely follow EU policies on education, and on issues such as the grave, and seemingly intractable problem of alarmingly high unemployment among young adults in parts of Europe. (Women’s religious congregations are not formally present to the EU Institutions, as they are, for example, to the United Nations in New York.)

A Christian civil society, too, is actively engaged in Brussels: for example, in the sphere of political action on issues of poverty, Caritas Europa represents the federation Caritas International, focusing on issues *within* the Member States; *Coopération internationale pour le développement et la solidarité* (CIDSE) represents Catholic agencies of the Member States devoted to *international* development. Caritas Europa and CIDSE each have Protestant analogues, respectively Eurodiaconia and the Association of World Council of Churches related Development Organizations in Europe (APRODEV). All these bodies collaborate ecumenically, both on principle and for pragmatic strategic reasons: if the churches could not agree substantive policies among themselves, their collective witness before the EU would be enfeebled. These various bodies are independent, but COMECE consults with them and facilitates their access to the EU. Similarly, COMECE maintains a regular dialogue with ecumenical bodies, in particular with the Conference of European Churches (CEC), which represents most churches in Europe other than the Roman Catholic Church.

In meetings with the EU COMECE is often accompanied by representative bodies from other faith communities: in Brussels, notably the Reformed Jewish and the Muslim communities. In the case of Islam, however, there is often little clarity about which institutions best represent the faith community as a whole. In other inter-religious forums in Brussels, the Catholic representation would typically be held by the local archdiocese of Malines-Bruxelles, or by religious orders, rather than by COMECE.

A still broader sphere of dialogue and participation is known by the characteristic Brussels term ‘inter-convictionnel’, which denotes discussions bringing together bodies representing both faith communities and non-religious humanist groups. These broader meetings occur in virtue of Article 17 of the Lisbon Treaty.

## Major events

### Papal speeches to the European Parliament

In a history of almost forty years, a few highlights must suffice. Over this period two popes have delivered formal addresses to the European Parliament in Strasbourg: John Paul II in October 1988 (Pope John Paul II, 1988) and Francis in November 2014 (Pope Francis, 2014).<sup>1</sup> The two speeches, a quarter of a century apart, offer a telling contrast.

John Paul II developed a Christian anthropology, relating it to the mission of the EU by way of both affirmation and challenge. In retrospect, his speech appears foundational, underlying many subsequent positions taken by COMECE, as for example its insistence on a 'social market economy' in which neither market nor government enjoys absolute status. He began by noting that by 1988 the European Parliament was directly elected, so could guide the EU as a democratic community of countries desirous of 'offering all their citizens greater freedom in the perspective of mutual cooperation and cultural enrichment'. He described the EU as essentially a 'peace project', among nations 'which throughout the centuries have used their strength to wage war and seek domination over one another'. He then made a fundamental and positive observation about the EU's identity: 'A common political structure, the product of the free will of European citizens, far from endangering the identity of the peoples in the Community, will be able to guarantee more equitably the rights, in particular the cultural rights, of all its regions'. A further affirmation concerned the EU's future: 'my wish is that Europe, willingly giving itself free institutions, may one day reach the full dimensions that geography and, even more, history have given it'.

John Paul also challenged the ethos of the EU (and the prosperous Western world as a whole), contrasting two currents of thought: one which considers 'obedience to God to be the source of true freedom, which is never a mere arbitrary or aimless freedom, but a freedom for truth and the good, those two great goods which always lie beyond man's ability to enjoy them completely'; the second, which 'having suppressed all subordination of the creature to God or to any transcendent order of truth and good, sees man in himself as the principle and end of all things, and society, with its laws, norms, and achievements as his absolutely sovereign work'. Neither state nor society must be 'idolized', however, since these entities 'belong to the changing and always perfectible framework of this world'. No less important, individual interests are always to be subordinated to the common good.

For Francis in November 2014, Europe was *not* axiomatically the heart of global civilization: in the face of more vigorous societies it, the continent could even appear 'elderly' and 'haggard'. Nevertheless, Francis affirmed the EU's vocation to protect and nourish human dignity and democracy. The forces threatening this twin good were identified in a way that, while consistent with John Paul's vision, bore a distinctive accent. In Francis's view human dignity and democracy are eroded less by secularity than by discrimination, by destitution, by tyranny, by the radical rejection of others implicit in the EU States' hostility to migrants and refugees; also by 'consumerism', by the individualism that regards human beings as monads rather than as 'beings in relation', and by the 'throwaway culture' which treats persons according to the reductionist measure of their economic productivity. Further and provocatively, Francis believed these values threatened by multinational corporations which 'weaken [democracies] and turn them into uniform systems of economic power at the service of unseen empires'. Speaking when the devastation caused by the recent economic crisis had become undeniable, Francis alleged that corporations (especially financial institutions), their leaders and shareholders, had unjustly protected their profits while co-opting governments to project their losses onto the general public.



## COMECE congresses

If such papal speeches helped set COMECE's agenda, its own congresses *enact* that agenda. In 2007, COMECE organized a congress in Rome, marking the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty of Rome. The congress assembled some 400 participants from the Catholic Church and beyond. The resulting statement was entitled *Values and Perspectives for Europe: 50 Years of the Treaties of Rome* (COMECE, 2007). While it named a familiar set of evils ('poverty, especially in Africa [ ... ] the exploitation of women and children and the violation of human rights [ ... ] the causes and consequences of climate change') it added two topical challenges: the apparent remoteness and capacity of political institutions, and 'the return of nationalist, racist, xenophobic and selfish tendencies in our countries'. Over the decade to come, these two elements would increasingly threaten the EU itself and its capacity to achieve the aspirations of John Paul II.

A decade later, faced with the economic crisis and a newly fissiparous political dynamic, the EU could no longer be supposed to embody either the ideal or the destiny of a 'community of European states'. Accordingly, the title of COMECE's congress of 2017, was '(Re)Thinking Europe – a Christian Contribution to the Future of the European Project'. Those present included leaders from ecclesial, political, and academic sectors, from civil society as a whole, as well as a notable group of young adults.

Francis's statement to the meeting was dramatic, even passionate, recognizing a crisis that went beyond the political or economic level to the anthropological. Human dignity, the defence of the poor and their rights, and democracy, he insisted, all rely on resisting a threatening culture of ideological abstraction. The first and perhaps greatest Christian contribution to debates in this field might be to insist that Europe is not a mass of statistics or institutions, but is made up of *people*.

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We see how frequently issues get reduced to discussions about numbers. There are no citizens, only votes. There are no migrants, only quotas. There are no workers, only economic markers. There are no poor, only thresholds of poverty. The concrete reality of the human person is thus reduced to an abstract – and thus more comfortable and reassuring – principle. The reason for this is clear: people have faces; they force us to assume a responsibility that is real, personal and effective. Statistics, however useful and important, are about arguments; they are soulless. They offer an alibi for not getting involved, because they never touch us in the flesh.

(Pope Francis, 2017)

Positively, Francis proposed as 'Christianity's second contribution' the ideal of 'community', which stands over against both individualism and any collectivism that denies the dignity of persons. He summoned both the EU as such, and its Member States, to address the need for open-heartedness towards those readily regarded somehow as less than persons:

We cannot regard the phenomenon of migration as an indiscriminate and unregulated process, but neither can we erect walls of indifference and fear. For their part, migrants must not neglect their own grave responsibility to learn, respect and assimilate the culture and traditions of the nations that welcome them.

(Pope Francis, 2017)

## Major publications

In addition to the regular but short articles of *EuropeInfos*, and its regular press releases, COMECE publishes extended reports on matters at the heart of its mission. Like many COMECE documents, these are often *reports* to the bishops, not statements of COMECE as such.

Such documents cover a broad range of subjects. A document of 2007, for example, entitled *A Europe of Values: The Ethical Dimension of the European Union*, was prepared by an expert group including two former prime ministers, (one of them also a former President of the European Commission) a former Director General of the World Trade Organization and a former UK Permanent Representative to the EU (COMECE, 2007). In 2003 a Global Governance Assessment of some eighty pages was commissioned by COMECE, the expert group being chaired by a former Managing Director of the IMF. (A further such assessment followed in 2006.) A report entitled *A Christian View on Climate Change* (COMECE, 2008—revised in 2011 and 2015) was written by academics and senior civil servants, as well as the then Vice-Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). COMECE’s status is evidently such as to convene eminent international authorities, working free of their customary institutional constraints, producing work of a weight worthy of policy makers’ respect. The subtitle of the IPCC’s report, *The Implications of Climate Change for Lifestyles and Policies*, implies that Christians cannot witness to the Gospel merely by proposing relevant action to others: on the contrary, Christian witness is always self-implicating, requiring the coherence of the life lived with the message proclaimed.

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A very different work was the 2011 statement of COMECE itself, prepared for it over months by a broad range of experts, entitled *A European Community of Solidarity and Responsibility*, a statement which reflected on the EU’s treaty objective of ‘a highly competitive social market economy’ (COMECE, 2011). Like many COMECE documents, this drew on the resources of Catholic social thought, including such Papal Encyclicals as *Centesimus Annus* of John Paul II (1991), to present and evaluate a defining characteristic of the EU, its espousal of a clear and reasoned alternative to the concept of the ‘free market economy’, which in 1991 seemed to be regarded by many as being decisively triumphant. Such reports—such as those on poverty and the peace of the world in 2016, and on the future of work in 2018—often conclude with specific political recommendations.

## Challenges: intrinsic, external, internal

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### Intrinsic challenges

Challenges at many levels are inescapable, as a worldview which aspires to universal relevance and internal consistency is brought to bear on a discourse, that of politics, which is essentially contested and (in our present political configurations) predominantly national.

One inherent tension concerns the ‘essential radicalism’ of the Church. Evangelization presents an uncompromisingly transcendent perspective, bearing on the necessarily pragmatic character of political decisions. It enjoins self-giving, not acquisition; self-surrender (including the collective self), not self-assertion. In this sense the religious witness is defiantly anti-political. It is no coincidence that the issue on which ecclesial advocacy repeatedly confronts governments is that of the defence of the dignity and rights of asylum seekers, refugees and, more generally, of ‘economic migrants’. For the Church with its universal mission, the life of a dispossessed asylum seeker is no less valuable than the life of an affluent European citizen. National politicians, requiring electoral support, are scarcely free to think in these terms. Church advocacy may also carry a passion reflecting the scale and intensity of the contemporary reality, as in Pope Francis’ homily on the tragedy of drowned migrants in Lampedusa, in July 2013 (Pope Francis, 2013). In a global perspective that passion is fitting. In 2020, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that there were in 2019 70.8 million people around the world forced from home: among them were nearly 25.9 million refugees, over half of whom were under the age of eighteen (UNHCR, 2020).

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The vast majority of migrants take refuge in neighbouring countries hardly richer than their own, while the prosperous world refuses to share the burden. Further, the crisis has manifestly overwhelmed the capacity of both national and supranational political institutions to manage it humanely and justly; some

key frontiers have become deadly places, as the Mediterranean, or the border between Mexico and the USA. Yet the Church knows only too well that political leaders, however morally sympathetic, rarely have the practical possibility of calling their citizens to the personal sacrifice entailed by justice: notoriously, ‘no one wins votes by defending the rights of migrants’.

Secondly, the EU institutions embrace a broad spectrum of political and cultural views. The Parliament’s political groups include national parties often regarded as ‘extremist’. The Church must listen as well as speak, must risk uncongenial encounter while holding firm to its principles. It must communicate without compromise, yet to a pluralist society, not only to the like-minded. In Brussels, as in any Member State, the Church will not adopt the same posture towards, nor focus on the same issues with, a socialist government as with a neo-liberal one, nor deal with a party in government as with a party of opposition. Combining flexibility and relevance with integrity and consistency is a challenge that must always be newly faced. In particular, COMECE would be alienated from its member conferences if its stance towards the EU diverged excessively from those issues which its constituent episcopal conferences might wish to raise with its own governments.

A third challenge arises because (unlike at least some Member States) the EU is a secular arena: not, however, ‘secularist’ in excluding religious groups from public debate. This secularity, both substantive and procedural, and in our time explicitly accepted by the Church in principle, nevertheless entails two awkward consequences for dialogue, and especially for advocacy. Frequently, one may be able to agree at the level of policy yet be methodologically blocked from appealing to the vision underpinning that policy—even though particular arguments are scarcely comprehensible except in the light of some worldview, some explicable foundation. If the Church advocates at the European Parliament on behalf of rights of migrants, for example, it is precluded from grounding that advocacy in the biblical commandment to assure special respect to ‘widows, orphans and strangers’ (i.e. foreigners), as in Deuteronomy 16:9–15.

Furthermore, the underlying principles themselves must sometimes be expressed in terms that are hardly shared or understood beyond the faith community. Much Catholic social thought appeals to the principle of ‘the common good’, which is often taken by political actors as virtually equivalent to the utilitarian principle of ‘the greatest good of the greatest number’. Yet these two concepts embody radically different worldviews. The common good *begins* with the inclusion of the poor and excluded, who, as one sees in almost every election manifesto, are marginalized by the utilitarian calculus.

In addition, religious discourse often encounters secularity as a counter-position. The counter-position may in fact be salutary: the Christian community in India, for example, yearns for a ‘secular’ government when it actually suffers systemic discrimination imposed by a ‘Hindu nationalist’ party, against Muslims as well as Christians. The fundamental problem is that the principle of secularity, while embodying its own worldview over against other worldviews, simultaneously claims neutral and normative status, as if the word ‘secular’ were equivalent to ‘reasonable’. If there is good and bad religion, then secularity too must be subject to interrogation.

## External challenges

Since 2009, the Lisbon Treaty dialogue has struggled to move beyond formal encounters, their scripts written in advance, towards *working* dialogue. Further, the dialogues too often focus on religions themselves and their place in the Brussels arena, rather than on the entire civil and religious realm. Yet the Gospel is not a discourse about ‘religion’, and churches’ concerns are rightly directed to those ‘secular’ elements of governance and economic life that bear directly on the overall quality of human living in community.



Socially conscious Christians will always bear in mind four questions, not necessarily explicitly articulated, and none of them 'religious'. Who makes the decisions in question? Who gains by them? Who suffers most from them? Which groups are prevented from making their voices heard? To take a single example, churches are currently concerned that various models of security legislation (such as 'Prevent' in England and Wales) may threaten civil and religious liberties in the name of protection against terrorism. Associated policy documents, however, go beyond 'terrorism' to impugn the honourable, even indispensable, concept 'radical'. Thus, in the government's *Revised Prevent Guidance for England and Wales*, booklet, the glossary defines 'radicalisation' as 'the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups' (HM Government, 2019). For the churches, the Gospel itself is a call to be 'radicalized', precisely in its commitment to non-violent peace-making.

Similarly, faith-based witness is often treated as merely a political *problem*, rather than as a resource which can enrich a discussion by introducing a deeper dimension. Speaking of the EU's obligation under the Treaty of Lisbon to dialogue equitably with different religious groups, a senior EU official, himself Catholic, once remarked good-humouredly to the present writer, 'We *have* to talk with you [i.e. Christians] because we *need* to talk with Muslims.'

Thirdly, politicians are uneasy in dealing with religious groups which embody some form of claim to authority. Ecclesial advocacy can never rightly require politicians to share the Church's own faith: it must proceed on the basis of reason without appeal to a special revelation, and it is tactically counter-productive to 'quote the Bible'. But the recent standard collection of the Catholic Church's social thought is entitled *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, and English translations of the encyclical letters of Pope Benedict XVI prefer the phrase 'social doctrine' to 'social teaching'. In the present context, this preference is unfortunate, since the claim to magisterial authority implicit in the word 'doctrine' is inescapable. Politicians cannot easily accept the claim and understandably do not know how to deal with it.

## p. 381 **Internal challenges**

An inherent episcopal mission is to seek, and even embody, the unity of the Church, and a hierarchy is rightly concerned to achieve a 'union of minds and hearts'. For COMECE, therefore, which represents the EU hierarchies collectively, internal disputes may be both intractable and painful. When it comes to policy, 'union' does not necessarily entail unanimity. Catholic hierarchical practice, however, has perennially emphasized agreement, typically consigning episcopal dispute to the private forum. This stance can strike outsiders, not least political actors who *live* by public debate, as being at worst disingenuous and at best patronizing.

Paradoxically, Pope Francis may share this 'outsider's' stance. Against the odds, he has strenuously sought to promote open dialogue within the Church: departing strikingly from his predecessors, for example, in using episcopal synods to promote animated debate. Only by doing so could he credibly insist to the COMECE Assembly in 2017 that 'favouring dialogue, in any form whatsoever, is a fundamental responsibility of politics'.

Therefore, just as diverse civil and political heritages are assembled within the EU, ecclesial heritages also need to be held in tension. 'Tensions' are not negative: in complex situations they are a logical consequence of avoiding absolutism or over-simplification. In economic life, for example, the tension is intrinsic between growth and fair distribution. Without sufficient growth there will be few public resources to be shared, yet without equitable distribution, growth has no manifest public value. Thus, a search for truth and justice is not least *constituted* by negotiating tensions. As Pope John Paul II said speaking to professors and students in Cologne Cathedral, early in his pontificate, 'Philosophy and theology are, as sciences, limited

attempts which can represent the complex unity of truth only in diversity, that is, within an open system of complementary items of knowledge' (Pope John Paul II, 1980).

For a body such as COMECE the consequences of living amid such tensions is acute. In some countries of Central and Eastern Europe (such as Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia) the Christian churches have been historically churches of resistance, committed to expressing their people's yearning for liberty. The churches of these countries shared to different degrees in the national achievement of political liberation. Naturally enough, they are slow to criticize governments which now claim to represent precisely that liberation from external control. In contrast, Western churches have, over generations, become accustomed to taking a critical role towards civil power—structures of almost any ideology. Mere endorsement seems redundant, mere praise seems akin to flattery, so churches' interventions tend to focus on challenge and criticism, across a broad range of themes: issues of poverty, armaments, environmental responsibility, employment; more generally, of the status of marriage, of human rights, and the right to religious and civic freedom, and of issues affecting the beginning and end of life, such as abortion or euthanasia.

p. 382 Given these diversities, it is unsurprising that, just as the EU faces the danger of fragmentation (provoked notably by the economic crises prevalent since 2008) COMECE <sup>4</sup> faces an equivalent danger, which may be illustrated by a controversy that took place in February 2016. An article was written for *EuropeInfos* by a prominent Polish commentator Henryk Woźniakowski, President of the Catholic publishing house Znak. He criticized the governing Polish Law and Justice Party (PiS) (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*) for its relentless practice of centralization, and for allegedly undermining constitutional safeguards and civil rights, adding that this policy had met little protest from the hierarchy. When the article appeared online, the Bishops' Conferences of Poland objected, apparently regarding the article as an official statement from COMECE, and thus as an act of interference in the internal affairs of Poland and its episcopacy. Rather than proposing corrections, the Polish bishops demanded that the article be withdrawn. Now, as has already been stated, *EuropeInfos* is not simply the official voice of the bishops. It also seeks to inform them, and one may well be informed by uncongenial arguments. Further, issues of fundamental rights are a core COMECE theme, and the article was one of a series seeking to evaluate the status of fundamental values in the politics of EU Member States. Perhaps regrettably, COMECE refrained from entering a debate that risked becoming unseemly, simply noting that the proposed article had been withdrawn at the explicit request of the Polish Bishops' Conference. The act of withdrawal had its own impact, though, effectively drawing attention to the underlying dispute.

That same issue of *EuropeInfos*, of February 2016, also published an article by Hans Schelkshorn, a Professor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Catholic Theology of the University of Vienna, entitled 'Ideology of the New Right in Hungary'. Schelkshorn argued that the government of Viktor Orbán had espoused a national politics of ethnicity, harassing 'outsiders': that is, 'Roma, Jews, atheists, socialists and avant-garde artists'. Mr Orbán himself had commended the merits of an 'illiberal democracy', and his government had proclaimed, 'We don't want to live together with Muslims'. Crucially, Schelkshorn went on to argue that Christian church leaders in Hungary tacitly supported such policies; for example, by publicly calling on their people to pray for Mr Orbán (though not for his opponents). As in the case of Poland, the Hungarian bishops did not attempt a refutation but demanded the article's withdrawal. In this way, the pervasive state hostility to 'Brussels', evinced in Hungary, Poland, and elsewhere, can be echoed among Catholic hierarchies.

In understanding this controversy, it should be recalled that Poland and Hungary have experienced a recent and rapid transition. Poland cast off Soviet rule at great cost, then was welcomed by the EU, operating from its own self-image (not unjustified) as peace-maker. Poland quickly and seamlessly adopted a new constitution, almost as a prize for entry. A Polish colleague has suggested to the present writer that this new European polity has not yet been assimilated by many Poles. Faced with the present PiS government, however, many, particularly of Poland's younger generation, realize that 'Western freedoms' are neither

gained nor preserved without struggle. The bishops, too, may now be called to appreciate that support for the government can no longer be their default posture.

p. 383 These examples are significant because their fundamental problematic is likely to endure. Unity is generally regarded as a mark of the Church's authenticity, and specifically ↳ of its hierarchy. But hierarchies cannot stand above, or claim to be exempt from, the tensions of the age. Truth, fairness, and respect presuppose the *negotiation* of tensions, not their denial.

## Conclusion

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COMECE's role in representing the European episcopacies to the EU and the EU to the local churches is arduous and sometimes thankless. Yet this mission remains of vital interest to the Church: to remain present to an arena in which policies are formed and decisions taken which bear on the life of some 500 million citizens directly, and the whole world indirectly.

One change in COMECE's role since its foundation in 1980 is especially striking. Despite maintaining a suitably critical distance from the EU project, COMECE has accompanied that project and its continuous expansion. States have consistently been eager to join the EU. However, a consistent expansion, coupled with prosperity, can obscure the seeds of fragmentation or even of dissolution. As has been seen, COMECE experiences, and sometimes embodies, the consequent tensions. Brussels is not intrinsically more remote or alienated from the life of 500 million EU citizens than are the governments of single states such as China and India from their populations of one billion and more. But it has often suited EU Member States to highlight and sometimes to polemicize this remoteness. Since the collective political stances of Catholics rarely diverge radically from those of other citizens, COMECE's constituent episcopates reflect centrifugal forces as well as unifying ones.

In October 2010 Jacques Delors, President of the European Commission from 1985 to 1992, asserted the need for the EU to acquire a 'soul' in the face of contrary but equally dehumanizing tendencies of globalization and individualism (European Parliament, 2010). Delors was a practising Catholic and a socialist. His statement epitomizes his long-standing commitment to European unity. Throughout its history, COMECE has shared this aspiration. Its statement of 2004, 'Solidarity Is the Soul of the European Union' (issued on the occasion of the accession of ten new states to the EU) argues as follows:

At this turning point in the history of the EU [ ... ] we believe that the common European interest should prevail over national interests and should determine our actions to a greater extent in the future. Giving precedence to the common interest in issues of vital common concern has proven its value as an organizational principle for the EU, [...]

(COMECE, 2004: §.1)

p. 384 COMECE therefore supposes that solidarity is possible for the EU, if to an indeterminate degree. Indeed, its later document of 2011, outlining the nature of a 'competitive social market economy' is entitled 'A European Community of Solidarity and Responsibility'. ↳ COMECE's witness to the EU today may depend on the quality of its own continued commitment to these twin principles in the face of counter-forces within the Church itself. The future of COMECE as an effective instrument of the Church—a Church which can never authentically retreat into nationalism—may depend on its finding an adequate way of living this tension peaceably.

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## Notes

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- 1 The Parliament, through the then President of its Parliamentary Assembly, Hans-Gert Pöttering, planned to invite Pope Benedict XVI in 2007. The invitation was not accepted, though Benedict received the Parliament's then President Jerzy Buzek (as it happens, a Polish Lutheran) in 2011.

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CHAPTER

## 22 Religion and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

W. Cole Durham

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### Abstract

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and its Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) have played an important role in reinforcing, distilling, and implementing the fundamental right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) in the OSCE region. The CSCE (later OSCE) has engaged in major norm-setting initiatives regarding FoRB. The ODIHR's Advisory Panel/Council on Freedom of Religion or Belief emerged in 1997, and in ensuing years, produced legislative reviews, 'Guidelines for Review of Legislation' (2004); and the *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions or Beliefs in Public Schools* (2007). The FoRB Programme at ODIHR followed through with 'Guidelines on the Legal Personality' (2014) and 'Freedom of Religion or Belief and Security' (2019). These documents are at the core of more extensive institutional promotion of FoRB.

**Keywords:** Helsinki Process, CSCE, OSCE, ODIHR, FoRB, human rights, legal personality, legal entity, security

**Subject:** History of Religion, Religion

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THE Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has played a largely unsung but profound role in advancing implementation of freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) in the contemporary world. FoRB is the oldest of the internationally protected human rights, with a history going back to the Religious Peace of Augsburg of 1555 and the Treaties of Westphalia of 1648 (Evans, 1997, 2004). In the intervening centuries, it has emerged as one of the most fundamental of human rights, often honoured as a 'first freedom', and clearly recognized as a right that is closely linked to the core of human dignity. It is now explicitly protected in the constitutions of the overwhelming number of nations on earth. What was in the earliest days the fragile seedling of a right has blossomed into one of the most deeply rooted of all human rights, having an honoured place in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)<sup>1</sup> and having been duly incorporated in formal treaty language in Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political

Rights (ICCPR),<sup>2</sup> and in Article 9 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR).<sup>3</sup>

p. 387 While the right to freedom of religion or belief has a long ancestry and has ultimately been anchored into international law as a fundamental, universal, and even ↵ non-derogable human right,<sup>4</sup> its implementation in practice has remained limited in many respects. The abstractness of the ringing clauses with which it is endorsed in constitutions and international instruments leaves far too much room for restrictive interpretations that undermine the effectiveness of the right, even when countries give it lip service. And of course, in far too many countries, the right is honoured only in the breach. Implementation shortfalls occur not only in underdeveloped countries outside Europe, but within Europe as well. This was particularly evident under the communist regimes that dominated Eastern Europe for much of the second half of the twentieth century. But problems have also arisen in countries with dominant historical religions. In fact, no country has been problem free.

## Key CSCE/OSCE institutions

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In this somewhat clouded context, the OSCE has provided a unique institutional milieu in which substantial progress in advancing freedom of religion or belief could be achieved. The predecessor of the current OSCE —the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)—was the result of efforts to bring about détente between the Western and Soviet blocs in the 1970s. The CSCE was formally launched with the signing of the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe on 1 August 1975 (Gibson and Lord, 2004). The CSCE was created as a multilateral forum in which the countries of NATO and the Warsaw Pact could come together for dialogue and negotiation on issues of military security, economic, and social cooperation, and on issues of human rights and other humanitarian concerns. The history of the CSCE/OSCE can be divided into two broad stages. From 1974 to 1990, the CSCE operated as a conference with intermittent meetings, but no formal institutional structure. Meetings in Belgrade, Madrid, and Vienna resulted in significant commitments, including commitments on issues relating to religion. Beginning with the Paris Summit Meeting in 1990, processes of institutionalization began. That Summit saw the adoption of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, which began to shape the organization's identity in the transformed environment of Europe following the collapse of communism. As part of the institutionalization, the name was changed from CSCE to OSCE by a decision of the Budapest Summit of Heads of State or Government in December 1994.<sup>5</sup> Many of what have become the OSCE's key institutions emerged during this period (i.e. in the early 1990s).<sup>6</sup>

p. 388 From the beginning, the CSCE/OSCE has operated by consensus, or to be technically accurate, by the principle of consensus-minus-one—taking into account situations where there is consensus that one country is a wrongdoer, such as when Serbia was suspended from the CSCE for aggression in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992 (Bloed, 1993: 58 and n. 30). From the time of the adoption of the Helsinki Final Act,<sup>7</sup> commitments developed have been said to be politically, but not legally, binding (Buergenthal, 1991: 346). Indeed, the term 'commitments' is used in contrast to 'obligations' precisely to avoid suggesting that the commitments constitute legal obligations (Buergenthal, 1991: 377). This distinction opened the pathway for development of commitments that could be much more concrete than what is considered typical in formal treaty language, and yet for that very reason, could be more effective. Stated differently, the CSCE/OSCE process developed a form of soft law that particularly in the aftermath of communism has been very significant in raising both standards and implementation of freedom of religion or belief.

## Norm-setting processes

An important example of this process can be seen in the 'Concluding Document of the Vienna Meeting of Representatives of the Participating States of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe' adopted in 1989, which in many ways marked the high water mark in OSCE norm-setting initiatives. The Vienna Meeting continued over three years, from 1986 to 1989.<sup>8</sup> It underwent repeated significant transformations as reverberations from *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the Soviet Union led to sweeping changes in the nature of commitments that could be made. What is significant is the level of detail that emerged from the process. In contrast to Article 18 of the ICCPR or Article 9 of the ECHR, each of which is only a few lines long, the Vienna Concluding Document's provisions on freedom of religion or belief go into great detail. Principles 16 and 17 read as follows:

- (16) In order to ensure the freedom of the individual to profess and practise religion or belief, the participating States will, inter alia,
- (16.1) - take effective measures to prevent and eliminate discrimination against individuals or communities on the grounds of religion or belief in the recognition, exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in all fields of civil, political, economic, social and cultural life, and to ensure the effective equality between believers and non-believers;
  - (16.2) - foster a climate of mutual tolerance and respect between believers of different communities as well as between believers and non-believers;
  - (16.3) - grant upon their request to communities of believers, practising or prepared to practise their faith within the constitutional framework of their States, recognition of the status provided for them in their respective countries;
  - (16.4) - respect the right of these religious communities to
    - establish and maintain freely accessible places of worship or assembly,
    - organize themselves according to their own hierarchical and institutional structure, Vienna 1989 43
    - select, appoint and replace their personnel in accordance with their respective requirements and standards as well as with any freely accepted arrangement between them and their State,
    - solicit and receive voluntary financial and other contributions;
  - (16.5) - engage in consultations with religious faiths, institutions and organizations in order to achieve a better understanding of the requirements of religious freedom;
  - (16.6) - respect the right of everyone to give and receive religious education in the language of his choice, whether individually or in association with others;
  - (16.7) - in this context respect, inter alia, the liberty of parents to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions;
  - (16.8) - allow the training of religious personnel in appropriate institutions;
  - (16.9) - respect the right of individual believers and communities of believers to acquire, possess, and use sacred books, religious publications in the language of their choice



and other articles and materials related to the practice of religion or belief,

- (16.10) – allow religious faiths, institutions and organizations to produce, import and disseminate religious publications and materials;
- (16.11) – favourably consider the interest of religious communities to participate in public dialogue, including through the mass media.
- (17) The participating States recognize that the exercise of the above-mentioned rights relating to the freedom of religion or belief may be subject only to such limitations as are provided by law and consistent with their obligations under international law and with their international commitments. They will ensure in their laws and regulations and in their application the full and effective exercise of the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief.

The first clause of Principle 16 tracks the requirements of the ICCPR and the ECHR and emphasizes the importance of allowing only such limitations on FoRB as those treaties permit. But the remainder of the Principle 16 provisions deliver detailed commitments on known and recurring problems. A few of these can be highlighted by way of example.

p. 390 Thus, while Principle 16.2 remains general in some respects, it encourages participating states to take affirmative steps to foster a climate of tolerance and ↴ respect, both between believers of different communities and between believers and non-believers. In part, this is designed to reinforce the insistence of international treaty standards on protections both for religious beliefs and secular world views—of protecting both freedom of religion *or belief*. But it is also a reminder that religious beliefs are not the only beliefs that can display intolerance.

Other commitments address particular recurring problems with respect to matters often not explicitly addressed by more general provisions dealing with FoRB rights. Principle 16.3, for example, addresses the general issue of recognition of religious communities and granting them legal entity status if they wish to acquire it. From the perspective of the general public, this is not necessarily the most obvious FoRB problem, but for religious communities—particularly smaller, less popular religions—this is absolutely critical. Without legal personality, a religious community has difficulty acquiring or renting a place of worship, hiring clergy or other support personnel, opening bank accounts, acquiring and licensing vehicles, suing to protect its rights, and in general, functioning in modern society. Those drafting this provision understood that the religious association laws of different countries vary considerably, and often grant legal entity status using quite different mechanisms—corporations, associations, trusts, or other specialized forms of religious organization. Thus, there was no easy way to address the wide array of structures available to religious communities in different OSCE countries. But the idea advanced by Principle 16.3 is sufficiently clear. It speaks of granting to communities who request it ‘recognition of the status provided for them in their respective countries’. So long as communities are able and willing to abide by the general constitutional framework of their states, they are entitled to acquire some workable form of legal entity that allows them to carry out their religious affairs. This short provision thus establishes a concrete commitment to solve what had been an immense problem in many parts of Eastern Europe, and has helped guide adoption of improved legislation in many OSCE participating states.

Principle 16.4 has also been helpful in guiding legislation and state administration of religious affairs. This principle articulates key aspects of the right of religious communities to autonomy in their own affairs. It affirms their right to establish and maintain places of worship—seemingly a minimum threshold requirement for religious freedom, but a requirement that had often been ignored, whether due to overly restrictive land use codes or to more general constraints on rights to establish places of worship.

Principle 16.4 also affirms the right of religious communities to organize themselves in accordance with their own religious beliefs about ecclesiastical polity. In the Soviet era, some countries had required religious organizations to use democratic models of organization. This type of requirement was particularly problematic for the hierarchical Catholic and Orthodox churches of Southern and Eastern Europe. This provision assures that religious communities can choose the form of organization that comports with their beliefs—hierarchical, congregational, representational, connectional, or any of a myriad of other possibilities. A closely related point is made by the third subpoint of Principle 16.4, which emphasizes the right of religious communities to autonomy in the selection, appointment, and replacement of their personnel. Finally, Principle 16.4 affirms the right to solicit and receive voluntary financial and other contributions. This is absolutely vital to the ongoing life of religious communities. Despite their spiritual character, they cannot operate without funding. The various aspects of the right of religious communities to autonomy articulated by Principle 16.4 are arguably implicit in general religious freedom principles, but they are easily overlooked if not spelled out.

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Principle 16.5 addresses the importance of interfaith activities. Not all religious communities are proponents of ecumenical or other interfaith activities, and no community should be compelled to engage in such activities against its will. But often states can facilitate or encourage activities that build bridges of understanding between different religious communities. Commitment to fostering such activities is not necessarily an obvious implication of traditional FoRB norms, but it is a helpful commitment.

Principle 16.6 spells out rights to give and receive religious education. The practical realities of making this possible demand considerable effort, but this is a valuable starting point in helping states and their religious bureaucracies to think about how to respect rights regarding religious education. This often goes hand in hand with rights of parents to guide the religious and moral education of their children (Principle 16.7), as recognized in Article 18(4) of the ICCPR and Article 2 of the First Protocol to the ECHR, but this often raises controversial issues in many legal systems, and was certainly worth addressing.

Principle 16.8 assures the religious communities will have appropriate opportunities for arranging the training of their religious personnel—clergy, but also other personnel—in appropriate institutions. Principles 16.6, 16.7, and 16.8 are all critical in various ways to the transmitting of religious traditions from generation to generation, and well as to the practical operation of religious communities from year to year. Attention to the practical realities of institutionalization and institutional survival over time are vital, but are typically overlooked in more general FoRB instruments.

Principles 16.9 and 16.10 go to another dimension of the practical realities of religious life. In many religious communities, sacred books are a vital part of worship. Religious publications of many kinds—ranging from news circulars of a local congregation to theological treatises—are an important part of religious life. Certain kinds of religious clothing may be significant. Various objects may be part of worship services. Moreover, there need to be not only rights to use such objects, but also to produce, import, and disseminate them. Again, this is something that would seem to be logically implied by abstract international FoRB norms, but this level of detail provides important guides for national practice.

In short, the more particularized norms of OSCE commitments can be ignored or misapplied in the same way that abstract international law can be. Paper norms never constitute a guarantee of appropriate practice. But OSCE ‘soft law’ has proven its ability to enhance implementation of general norms in a number of ways. In the first place, as noted at the outset, the fact that it is not legally binding has made it easier for those negotiating the commitments to address concrete practical issues. Once the more concrete commitments are in place, they serve as helpful guides when participating states are adopting or administering legislation. A relevant OSCE commitment constitutes a useful argument in favour of better legislation. For example, the Vienna Concluding Document (and other similar OSCE commitments) have been relied upon repeatedly in the aftermath of the collapse of communism to improve the quality of

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legislation. Years later, they are also helpful in resisting relapse into more restrictive forms of legislation. The norms can also be invoked in dealing with administrators involved in implementing state programmes that may lead to conflicts with OSCE norms. Not only do the OSCE commitments highlight recurring legislative issues; they are also valuable in judicial and administrative settings. The European Court of Human Rights, for example, has cited OSCE commitments in resolving some of the FoRB cases it has addressed.<sup>9</sup> Finally, the OSCE Commitments, by drawing on the practical experience of those aware of recurring problems in the OSCE region, help point to best practices and practical resolutions of recurring problems.

The Vienna Concluding Document is just one of numerous such documents generated in successive years by OSCE institutions. Because it was in place in the dramatic years when religion laws were being revised throughout former Soviet space in the early 1990s, it had a particularly striking impact on law reform initiatives. But it is representative of the types of detailed guidance that OSCE norms have provided.<sup>10</sup> One shortfall of the Vienna Concluding Document was its failure to address explicitly the fact that freedom of religion or belief includes the right to change one's religion or belief. This was corrected in Principle 9.4 of the 1990 Copenhagen Concluding Document.<sup>11</sup> Also noteworthy is Paragraph 9.1 of that Document, which affirmed that freedom of expression includes 'freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers'. This would clearly cover the right of religious believers to 'receive and impart' religious information and ideas—a matter of deep import to religious communities with active missionary outreach programmes, but is also important for distribution of religious ideas and information within a religious community.

## Institutionalization of human dimension activities

p. 393 As institutionalization of the OSCE proceeded during the 1990s, a number of structures emerged that gave heightened attention to so-called human dimension concerns. These included enhanced monitoring mechanisms (Bloed, 1993), the holding of human dimension seminars,<sup>12</sup> which brought focused attention to bear on specific human dimension issues, and the institutionalization of regular and supplemental human dimension implementation meetings (HDIMs/SHDIMs) (Gibson and Lord, 2004: 252–3), which have been held annually since 1992.<sup>13</sup> The annual HDIM meetings provide an important context for country representatives to address each other and to interact with literally hundreds of civil society organizations regarding current issues of non-compliance with OSCE commitments. In addition, they provide important opportunities for side meetings among governments and for civil society networking. These initiatives came to be housed in the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), which was created in 1992 as an expansion of an earlier Office for Free Elections (Gibson and Lord, 2004: 244).

A particularly important human dimension seminar for the treatment of FoRB in the OSCE was a seminar on 'Constitutional, Legal and Administrative Aspects of the Freedom of Religion' that was held in April 1996 (Gibson and Lord, 2004: 253). The seminar assembled representatives from most OSCE participating states and leading experts on FoRB for intensive discussions of a range of issues, including state-sponsored churches, equality for religious communities, religion and education, registration and recognition procedures, proselytism, and so on. As a follow-up to this seminar in 1997, ODIHR created an Advisory Panel of Experts to assist ODIHR in its work of strengthening implementation of the FoRB commitments of OSCE participating states (Gibson and Lord, 2004: 253; Krapf, 2009: 181, 183–4).<sup>14</sup> The institutionalization of this body was further strengthened in 1999 thanks to strong encouragement from the then Chair-in-Office (Norway), following a Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Freedom of Religion or Belief held in that year (Gibson and Lord, 2004: 253; Krapf, 2009: 185–8). The Panel has evolved and undergone various reorganizations over time, ultimately being restructured as an Advisory Council on Freedom of Religion or Belief. It has typically had a core working group of fifteen to twenty experts, and in some years

had a much larger set of members who participated via the internet. The Council was reorganized and reconstituted in 2013, and its membership is currently based on selection of experts from an open call for applications. In any event, the Advisory Panel/Council has played a significant role in many of the OSCE/ODIHR's major contributions to freedom of religion or belief over ensuing years. It has often played a role in reviewing draft legislation and assisting with ODIHR educational and training efforts. When it was first created, the Council was administered as part of the ODIHR's human rights programme. Largely for funding reasons, it was shifted to the Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Unit (TND) when that department was created, but it was transferred back to ODIHR's expanded Human Rights Department in 2014.

## Technical assistance on legislation

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The most significant impact that the OSCE in general and ODIHR in particular has had on FoRB has been their influence on relevant legislation. This impact has been felt both in terms of shaping and polishing draft legislation in preparation for its adoption, and through efforts that have persuaded legislators not to go forward with problematic legislation. Particularly 'east of Vienna' in the 1990s, legal systems were undergoing major transformations in the aftermath of the collapse of communism. As a result, many participating states turned to ODIHR for technical assistance. Particularly in its earlier years, the Advisory Council played an important role in such projects. Its experts came from countries representing a diverse array of religion-state systems and were thus well positioned to provide advice that was sensitive to fundamental human rights principles while identifying varied approaches that could take into account the differing history and experience of OSCE countries. At various times, Advisory Council members worked on reviews of draft legislation from most of the post-Soviet OSCE participating states.<sup>15</sup> Often, projects were coordinated with the Council of Europe's Venice Commission, which further expanded the credibility and the range of expertise of these legislative reviews. By the time of the Advisory Council's reorganization in 2013, the legislative team in ODIHR's Human Rights Department was able to take over more and more responsibility for legislative reviews, and the ODIHR's work was further benefited as more senior personnel came on board for this work. However, the increasingly professional staff has continued to benefit from the experience and expertise of the Advisory Council members.

Based on its experience in its early years, the Advisory Council prepared its *Guidelines for Review of Legislation Pertaining to Religion or Belief* (OSCE, 2004).<sup>16</sup> These *Guidelines* contain a concise analysis of the full range of issues that were being encountered in legislative proposals throughout the OSCE region. They identify the international legal sources relevant for such reviews and recurring substantive issues that are encountered in legislation. This includes questions regarding religion and education; the autonomy or self-determination rights of religious communities; legal questions that arise with respect to religious leaders and personnel; laws governing recognition and registration of religious communities; financial issues; missionary activity; issues that arise in institutions such as prisons, the military, and hospitals; exemptions granted on the basis of conscientious objection; and general questions about limitations on religious rights. The *Guidelines* also address a number of recurring practical issues, such as criminal and administrative penalties; national security and terrorism; land use; religious property disputes; the political activities of religious organizations; family law; religion and media; labour; and cemeteries. The *Guidelines* were designed to be used as a quick reference guide for legislators, and for that reason, also included relevant extracts from key international instruments that could be used for reference purposes.

The *Guidelines* became a useful tool that was regularly used in subsequent legislative review activities. They were an important source of guidance, since at the time, there were still relatively few decisions of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) or other authorities that could be used as definitive or at least persuasive authority. In the years since the *Guidelines* were promulgated in 2004, there has been a

proliferation of decisions of the ECtHR, as well as significant reports from the UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion or Belief, the Venice Commission, and so forth. The Advisory Council came close to updating the *Guidelines* in 2011, but this project was ultimately shelved by ODIHR, and replaced with a narrower project focusing on the right of religious and belief communities to acquire legal entity status, which will be discussed in what follows. Significantly, that later document expressly stated that the 2004 *Guidelines* had not been superseded, and they remain useful in legislative reviews.<sup>17</sup>

## Teaching *about* religions and beliefs

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p. 396 The next major initiative of the Advisory Council was its work on preparing and disseminating the *Toledo Guiding Principles for Teaching About Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools*.<sup>18</sup> The rationale for that project reflected two core principles; ‘first, that there is positive value in teaching that emphasizes respect for *everyone’s* right to freedom of religion and belief, and second, that teaching *about* religions and beliefs can reduce harmful misunderstandings and stereotypes’.<sup>19</sup> The project was undertaken during Spain’s term as Chair-in-Office of the OSCE and with Spain’s substantial support. ‘Toledo’ was added to the name of the document both because the Advisory Council’s initial meeting on the project was held in Toledo, and because of respect for the tolerant ↵ ‘confluence’ rather than ‘clash’ of civilizations that had been achieved there and in Córdoba during Spain’s earlier history.<sup>20</sup>

The *Toledo Guiding Principles* advance compelling reasons for thinking that quality teaching about religion, when carried out in a context of commitment to religious freedom and human rights, can make vital contributions to society. Such teaching promotes understanding of religious influences that shape social life, facilitates better self-understanding, contributes to understanding of literature and culture, and can help promote respectful behaviour.<sup>21</sup> Uniquely, the Advisory Council was able to provide a human rights perspective on teaching about religion.

For the *Toledo Guiding Principles* project, the ODIHR and the Advisory Council brought together prominent pedagogical experts from around the OSCE region to contribute to developing curricula for teaching about religion. Briefly stated, the *Principles* recommended that content of such curricula should be ‘sensitive, balanced, inclusive, non-doctrinal, impartial, and based on human rights principles relating to freedom of religion or belief’.<sup>22</sup> Importantly, such curricula need to ‘adhere to recognized professional standards ...[so that the information contained] is based on reason, is accurate, bias free, up to date, and does not oversimplify complex issues ... [and is] age appropriate [ ... ]’<sup>23</sup> Once curriculum content is developed, the *Principles* specify a number of helpful suggestions about possible pedagogical approaches, including ‘learning from religion’ in contrast to merely ‘learning about religion’, empathetic education, phenomenological approaches that present religion from an insider’s point of view, and other interpretive approaches.<sup>24</sup> Learning outcomes should include ‘development of knowledge, attitude, and competences’.<sup>25</sup>

One of the particularly striking findings of the *Toledo Guiding Principles* is how uniquely challenging it is to prepare teachers in this field. Where most teachers in public settings need to develop a manageable body of knowledge and basic pedagogical techniques, those teaching about religion are assumed to be knowledgeable about their own religion, the religions of those in their classrooms, other world religions, and in addition—as if the foregoing isn’t more than enough—they need to be aware of potential interreligious sensitivities among class members and to be competent to address any resulting tensions.<sup>26</sup> All too often, teacher education for teaching about religion is woefully deficient in preparing adequately trained teachers.

This leads to a final vital point stressed by the *Toledo Guiding Principles*: the importance of respecting rights in the process of implementing programmes for teaching about religions or beliefs. Among other things, as p. 397 curricula are being developed, it is ↵ vital to have an inclusive programme for consulting with parents,



teachers, religious communities, NGOs, and other stakeholders. Even the most inclusive policies, however, will be unsatisfactory as a matter of conscience for some. For that reason, it is vital to find reasonable adaptations for those with divergent beliefs. This too must be done in a sensitive manner. It is not enough to allow an opt-out, if that simply entails sending students to a room that is also used as a ‘punishment’ room for others. Opt-out mechanisms need to communicate respect. More generally, great care has to be given to a school’s *implicit* teaching about religions and beliefs. Lip service to this ideal is not enough. The most tolerant and inclusive curriculum can be undermined by the actions of an intolerant administrator.<sup>27</sup>

## Guidelines on legal personality

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Another major ODIHR accomplishment has been the publication of its *Guidelines on the Legal Personality of Religious or Belief Communities* in 2014.<sup>28</sup> As noted earlier, these *Guidelines* are an outgrowth of the Advisory Council’s earlier 2004 *Guidelines*, but they devote a full booklet to an issue that had received only a concentrated two-page treatment in the earlier work.<sup>29</sup> In contrast to the prior *Guidelines*, which were very much the work of the Advisory Council, the 2014 *Guidelines* were clearly the work of a now mature and expert ODIHR staff. The staff consulted the Advisory Council to be sure, and more than that, organized several events in various areas of the OSCE to make certain that broad-based input was received. But the final product was ultimately a creation of ODIHR and its professional staff.

It is important not to underestimate the significance of the 2014 document. At first blush, the legal personality of religious or belief communities appears to be a narrowly technical legal issue—far less dramatic than issues of acute religious persecution or mediagenic issues such as crucifixes in classrooms or the wearing of headscarves. But the reality is that the right to acquire legal personality is absolutely critical for religious communities. Most religious communities simply cannot operate in a contemporary legal setting without legal personality. As already indicated, they cannot rent or acquire places for worship; they cannot hire clergy or other personnel; they cannot open a bank account; and so forth. In other words, they cannot function. Moreover, non-recognition signals in profound ways that they (and their members) have second class status in society. In short, for most religious communities, acquiring legal personality is not just a small technical matter: it is literally existential.

p. 398 Beyond the significance of the legal personality issue, it is important to pay attention to the importance of the 2014 *Guidelines* grounding of rights in this domain. While the 2014 *Guidelines* did not in the end undertake a comprehensive updating of the full range of issues covered by the 2004 *Guidelines*, they do provide a thorough updating of the burgeoning authority for the general principles of FoRB that the Advisory Council had been working to include in a revision of the 2004 *Guidelines*. As a result the breadth of coverage was sacrificed, but the narrowing of focus made possible a deepening of the treatment of the issues that was able to take into account the extensive new case law of the European Court of Human Rights, the work of the Venice Commission, the reports of the UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion or Belief, and other relevant authoritative and persuasive material. In so doing, the 2014 *Guidelines* update the foundations of the earlier work, which is expressly reaffirmed and can draw on the strengthened base.<sup>30</sup> They then go on to do an excellent and thorough job of making the case that laws governing access to legal entity status should be designed to facilitate rather than restrict freedom of religion or belief. They document that ‘the autonomous existence of religious or belief communities is indispensable for pluralism’, that ‘legal personality status is vital to the full realization of the right to [FoRB]’, and that ‘[a]ny denial of legal personality [ ... ] would, therefore need to be justified under strict conditions [required by FoRB norms]’.<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, procedures for gaining access to legal personality ‘should be quick, transparent, fair, inclusive and non-discriminatory’.<sup>32</sup> The 2014 *Guidelines* thus constitute a major re-articulation of the ideal of freedom of religion or belief in a domain that has immense practical consequences, and they go further to provide practical, precise, and vital recommendations.

## Religion and security

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Since 9/11, concern with violence in the name of religion has taken on new and urgent salience.

Unfortunately, the unquestionably legitimate concern with security has given rise in many countries to overreactions which have resulted in undue restrictions on FoRB and other human rights. Because the OSCE from the beginning has been concerned both with comprehensive security and with human rights—indeed, it has always recognized comprehensive security necessarily includes human rights—it has made eminent good sense for ODIHR to tackle the challenge of determining how realistic national concerns can be woven together with other dimensions of security, including FoRB. With this in mind, after extensive

p. 399 consultations, ODIHR has published its 2019 *Freedom of Religion or Belief and Security: Policy Guidance* (OSCE/ODIHR, 2019). The document first reviews the OSCE's longstanding commitment to a comprehensive notion of security, according to which 'security is understood as comprehensive, co-operative, equal, indivisible and grounded in human rights'.<sup>33</sup> This notion reaches back to cold war days, but has been reaffirmed as recently as the 2013 Kyiv Ministerial Council Decision, which emphasized 'the link between security and full respect for freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief'.<sup>34</sup> After setting out a thorough review of OSCE commitments on FoRB, the *Policy Guidance* provides several pages of guiding principles designed to show how FoRB and security concerns can be pursued together. The principles identified involve educational measures, awareness-raising programmes, possibilities for interfaith dialogue and interreligious engagement (including coordinated efforts to advance FoRB), and policies that build on positive experiences with diversity. The principles reaffirm constitutional FoRB protections and emphasize that security-based constraints on FoRB need to be strictly drawn.

The *Policy Guidance* document then focuses on four practical areas where FoRB and security issues routinely collide: (1) the registration issue covered by the 2014 *Guidelines*; (2) issues of 'extremist' speech and literature; (3) problems associated with screening, monitoring and searches in places of worship or religious meeting places; and (4) restrictions on conversion and on religious or belief community activities that have foreign connections. In each of these cases, the *Policy Guidance* gives a realistic and practical analysis of the problems as they are encountered in the OSCE region and suggests security-sensitive ways of maximizing protection of FoRB while addressing realistic security concerns.

## Other OSCE initiatives for promoting FoRB

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What has been said thus far provides an overview of what is unquestionably one of the major ways that the OSCE has contributed to protecting religion and freedom of religion or belief—two critical aspects of the OSCE's human dimension work. The focus has been on norm formulation and implementation. But of course, the OSCE is a large and creative organization that carries out a broad range of programmes that promote or significantly overlap with FoRB concerns. For example, little has been said of the Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Unit ('TND'), other than the fact that for approximately a decade, the Advisory Council on FoRB was organizationally housed with TND. In fact, TND carries out extensive programmes to promote tolerance, to provide practical ↵ training, and to reduce discrimination. While the scope of ODIHR's FoRB Programme extends beyond tolerance and discrimination issues, and it has made good sense to return those working on FoRB to ODIHR's Human Rights Department, there is obviously a significant overlap in terms of both concerns and relevant stakeholders. Not surprisingly, then, there are still significant common initiatives with TND.

Neither has there been space to address the work of the Personal Representatives of the Chair-in-Office (Krapf, 2015: 139–42). The idea for these positions grew up at a time of increasing anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and persecution of Christians (and other groups). While significant measures were taken to

address these concerns through TND and other programmes, there was a feeling that the issues were so important that they needed to draw on the talents of high-level personalities with the gravitas and connections to crack through bureaucratic barriers and connect with high-level political and societal leaders who could have a practical impact on the intransigent problems involved.

Many other OSCE and ODIHR programmes could be mentioned. Examples include the FoRB Programme’s cooperation with OSCE Missions and field structures, and with the OSCE Secretariat. The OSCE engages in a wide and energetic array of capacity building initiatives. With respect to both the 2014 *Guidelines* and the 2019 *Policy Guidance* described above, the FoRB team has organized an array of meetings and training sessions. It has done extensive capacity-building work particularly in Central Asia, but also in other OSCE participating states. It regularly organizes roundtables, and also sends its key personnel to contribute to programmes and conferences organized by others, thereby broadening discourse and sharing expertise on FoRB issues. Last, but certainly not least, is the attention the OSCE has paid to bringing a gender perspective to bear on efforts to implement FoRB ideals.

## Conclusion

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In many ways, the role of the OSCE has declined from the halcyon days in the early 1990s. Russian intransigence and the consent-minus-one rule has meant that the OSCE has been less able to find consensus-backed areas where it can make progress on FoRB issues. Specifically, its significance has declined in comparison with other key international institutions such as the European Union and the Council of Europe and their respective institutions. That said, it has assumed some greater relevance following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and the rekindled need for an international security organization that can help bridge divides that crisis has spawned. Moreover, it retains a variety of significant roles, from election monitoring, to training initiatives, to human rights monitoring. Not least, it continues to have significant convening power—providing a place where important governmental and non-governmental parties can assemble and negotiate concrete solutions to intractable or continuing problems in the vast region stretching from ‘Vancouver to Vladivostok, moving east’. It remains a forum of opportunity for those seeking to solve the perennial human dimension problems bedevilling the fundamental right to the freedom of religion or belief.



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# Notes

- 4 ICCPR, art. 4(2).
- 1 UDHR, article 18, adopted and proclaimed by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 217A(iii) on 10 December 1948.
- 2 ICCPR, article 18, adopted and opened for signature by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2200A (XXI) on 16 December 1966; entered into force 23 March 1976.
- 3 ECHR, article 9; opened for Signature by the Council of Europe on 4 November 1950; entered into force 3 September 1953.
- 5 See [www.osce.org/history](http://www.osce.org/history). For convenience, references in what follows will simply be to the OSCE, although some of the matters described occurred during the CSCE period.
- 6 This includes Summits of Heads of State and Review Conferences, Human Dimension Meetings, the OSCE Ministerial Council, the Permanent Council, the Forum for Security Cooperation, rotating Chairman-in-Office patterns, the Secretary General, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Secretariat, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), among others (Gibson and Lord, 2004: 240–4).
- 7 Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe: Final Act, 1 August 1975 (Helsinki Final Act), Department of State Bulletin, September 1975, 323, 349, 14 I.L.M. 1292, 1325.
- 8 The human rights provisions of the 'Vienna Concluding Document' are available in OSCE/ODIHR (2011), *OSCE Human Dimension Commitments: Volume 2, Chronological Compilation* (3rd edn), pp. 39–55, available at [www.osce.org/odihr/76895](http://www.osce.org/odihr/76895).
- 9 See, *Kimlya and Others v. Russia* (ECtHR, App. No. 76836/01 and 32782/03, 1 October 2009), paras. 68–9.
- 10 The OSCE's FoRB-related norms are collected in OSCE/ODIHR (2011), pp. 118–21, available at [www.osce.org/odihr/elections/76894](http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/76894) and [www.osce.org/odihr/76895](http://www.osce.org/odihr/76895).
- 11 Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE (5–29 June 1990), Chapter II, Principle 9.4, available at [www.osce.org/odihr/19394?download=true](http://www.osce.org/odihr/19394?download=true).
- 12 See ODIHR, Human Dimension Seminars, [www.osce.org/odihr/123718](http://www.osce.org/odihr/123718).
- 13 Summaries of HDIM meetings for most years can be found by searching for 'Human Dimension Summary' in the search window of the OSCE home page, available at [www.osce.org](http://www.osce.org).
- 14 By way of full disclosure, the author of this chapter was a member of this Advisory Panel from its inception until formally released in 2013.

- 15 A sample of some of these legislative review projects for 2001-2003 is provided in Krapf, 2009: 190.
- 16 *Guidelines for Review of Legislation Pertaining to Religion or Belief*, prepared by the OSCE/ODIHR Advisory Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief in Consultation with the European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission), adopted by the Venice Commission (Venice, 18-19 June 2004), welcomed by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (Edinburgh, 5-9 July 2004)', available at <http://www.osce.org/odihr/13993>.
- 17 OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, *Guidelines on the Legal Personality of Religious or Belief Communities* (Warsaw, 2014), 5, available at <http://www.osce.org/odihr/139046>.
- 18 ODIHR Advisory Council of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief, *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools* (ODIHR, 2007), available at <https://www.osce.org/odihr/29154?download=true>. The author of this chapter was a co-chair of this project.
- 19 *Toledo Guiding Principles*, 12 (emphasis original).
- 20 *Toledo Guiding Principles*, flyleaf.
- 21 *Toledo Guiding Principles*, 19.
- 22 *Toledo Guiding Principles*, 40.
- 23 *Toledo Guiding Principles*, 41.
- 24 *Toledo Guiding Principles*, 45–48.
- 25 *Toledo Guiding Principles*, 48–49
- 26 See generally *Toledo Guiding Principles*, 50–62.
- 27 See generally *Toledo Guiding Principles*, 63–75.
- 28 OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, *Guidelines on the Legal Personality of Religious or Belief Communities* (Warsaw, 2014), available at <http://www.osce.org/odihr/139046>.
- 29 2004 *Guidelines*, Section II F, 16–18.
- 30 2014 *Guidelines*, 5.
- 31 2014 *Guidelines*, 21–23.
- 32 2014 *Guidelines*, 24.
- 33 *FoRB and Security Policy Guidance*, 9.
- 34 OSCE Ministerial Council, Decision No. 3/13, 'Freedom of Thought, Conscience, Religion or Belief', Kyiv, 6 December 2013, para. 6.

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CHAPTER

## 23 Religion, Belief, and the European Court of Human Rights

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### Abstract

This chapter examines the interpretation of the right to freedom of religion or belief under Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (1950) by the European Court of Human Rights. The topic is examined with reference to legal bans on items of Islamic dress such as headscarves and face-veils. It is argued that both the structure of Article 9, and the way in which it has been interpreted, has resulted in weak levels of protection for applicants bringing such claims, and that the reasons for this lie deep in European history and politics. The Court's approach may, arguably, be justifiable in that the protection it offers is subsidiary to that offered by states. Nevertheless, the scant hope that such applicants have raises questions as to the effectiveness of the Convention and threatens to undermine much of the laudable work that has been undertaken elsewhere by the Court.

**Keywords:** [European Court of Human Rights](#), [Article 9 ECHR](#), [freedom of religion](#), [freedom of belief](#), [conscience](#), [religious dress](#), [subsidiarity](#), [proportionality](#), [margin of appreciation](#)

**Subject:** [History of Religion](#), [Religion](#)

**Series:** [Oxford Handbooks](#)

THE European Court of Human Rights is (arguably) the foremost guardian of human rights in Europe. Hereinafter referred to as the ECtHR or Court, applications are submitted to it from complainants alleging violations of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), Europe's primary human rights document. For those who have exhausted *domestic* legal remedies, and continue to allege that their rights have been infringed, the Court offers an effective form of *international* redress vis-à-vis its application of European human rights law.

There is little doubt that in respect of the right to freedom of religion or belief (as well as to other human rights more generally), the ECtHR has been at the vanguard of conflict resolution and standard setting across Europe (Evans, 1997: ch. 11). Organized religion may seemingly be in decline in parts of the continent, but legal conflicts with a faith dimension have increased dramatically in recent years. Given the fact that '“religious litigation” is on the rise' (McCrudden, 2018: 126), the ECtHR has been in receipt of a steady stream of religion/belief cases in the last quarter of a century (Uitz, 2007). In this time it has, for example,

adjudicated and offered guidance on a wide variety of issues including church–state relations,<sup>1</sup> the freedom to hold religious meetings,<sup>2</sup> the protection of minority places of worship,<sup>3</sup> the recognition/dissolution of churches,<sup>4</sup> the swearing of oaths in court proceedings,<sup>5</sup> public displays of religious symbols in schoolrooms,<sup>6</sup> the limits of proselytism,<sup>7</sup> conscientious objection to military service,<sup>8</sup> and faith-related employment disputes.<sup>9</sup>

In view of the breadth of its jurisprudence in the field of religion and belief, it is impossible, within the confines of this chapter, to do justice to all of the issues examined to date by the Court. Thus, the primary focus of this chapter will be on a single topic that is currently both newsworthy and controversial—religious dress. A light will be shone on this issue as a means of critically analysing the role of the Court in the difficult and oft acrimonious area of freedom of religion and belief.

As will be explained in more detail, Article 9 of the ECHR guarantees the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. The Court has been bold in its public pronouncements about the significance of Article 9, and its recognition of the crucial role that beliefs (be they religious or secular in nature) play in the lives of those who hold them.<sup>10</sup> Yet while the ECtHR has been clearly willing to ‘talk the talk’, describing the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion as a ‘precious asset’ (Bratza, 2012), it is argued here that there are also key aspects of this right where the Court has been much less keen to ‘walk the walk’. In particular, a crucial shortcoming of the Court relates to the deference it has accorded to states on an area like that of religious dress, where there is little common ground in Europe. Despite the ECtHR’s obvious achievements in helping to fix the parameters of the right to freedom of religion and belief, it is hard to be overly enthusiastic about the record of a judicial body whose interpretation of Article 9 has (at least in some respects) often been synonymous with caution, inertia, and deference.

In seeking to analyse, critically, the Court’s record in the area of religion and belief, this chapter is structured as follows. First, by way of introduction, a very brief summary is given of the human rights context in which the ECtHR operates. Second, a short overview is provided of the main characteristics of Article 9 of the ECHR. Third, a number of reasons are adduced for why the ECtHR has had to deal with an increase in religious litigation in recent years. Fourth, the emotive and controversial issue of religious dress, which has garnered several applications to the Court in recent years, is then explored as a means of critically analysing the way in which the ECtHR has interpreted Article 9 of the ECHR. Finally, in the conclusion, the key arguments are summarized and attention is focused on some of the challenges that the Court is likely to face in the future.

## Context: the European Court of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights

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The ECtHR is the most ‘important, autonomous source of authority on the nature and content of fundamental rights in Europe’ (Stone Sweet and Keller, 2008: 3). Based in Strasbourg, France, the ECtHR’s primary task is to interpret the European Convention on Human Rights (1950)—an international human rights treaty, drafted under the auspices of the Council of Europe, which has been ratified by forty-seven European states.

The ECtHR consists of forty-seven judges (one from each signatory state), chosen from a list of applicants (put forward by Member States) by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. In a continent as large as Europe, it is axiomatic that an effective filtering system must be in place to ensure that only the most meritorious claims reach the ECtHR. Prior to 1998, the (now-defunct) European Commission of Human Rights undertook that task (Janis, Kay, and Bradley, 2008: 24–68) whereas today the admissibility of cases is vested in either a single judge for clearly inadmissible applications or, for more complex ones, a

committee of three judges. Accordingly, those applications that make their way to the Court are heard by a Chamber composed of seven judges—or, on occasion, by a Grand Chamber of seventeen judges, which decides a small number of select cases that raise novel or important issues (Harris *et al.*, 2018: 403).

The ECtHR has the jurisdiction to rule on complaints or ‘applications’ submitted by complainants or ‘applicants’, concerning alleged violations of the ECHR. These violations must have been allegedly committed by a state party to the Convention, and in this regard the Court is dependent on receiving applications, for it is not permitted to instigate legal proceedings on its own initiative. Violations of the ECHR must directly and significantly affect the applicant, who is typically an individual residing in the defendant state, although (very occasionally) applications have been brought by one state party against another (Harris *et al.*, 2018: 45).

The ECHR guarantees a number of (mainly) civil and political rights, and of these Article 9 is of particular relevance for this chapter (Council of Europe, 2019). Article 9 is drafted in the following terms:

9(1). Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.

9(2). Freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in ↪ the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

(European Convention on Human Rights, 1950)

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## The characteristics of Article 9 of the ECHR

As we have seen, Article 9 of the ECHR guarantees the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. By way of a general overview, a number of observations can be made about the structure, content and scope of this Article.

### Article 9—a ‘qualified’ right

To begin with, Article 9 is a ‘qualified’ right. This can be seen from the relationship between its two constituent parts. Whereas Article 9(1) affirms the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion in general terms, Article 9(2) is the ‘claw-back’ clause, stipulating the circumstances in which curbs may be legitimately placed on manifestations of religion or belief. Under Article 9(2) a restriction on the manifestation of one’s religion or belief may thus be justified if the restriction satisfies the threefold criteria of being ‘prescribed by law’, having a legitimate aim, and being ‘necessary in a democratic society’.

The first of these (that is, that a legitimate interference with a Convention right must be ‘prescribed by law’) requires that such a law is ‘adequately accessible’ and ‘formulated with sufficient precision to enable the citizen to regulate his conduct’.<sup>11</sup> The second criterion, of there being a legitimate aim, entails that curbs on *manifestations* of religion or belief may be imposed on the grounds of public safety,<sup>12</sup> public order,<sup>13</sup> health,<sup>14</sup> morals,<sup>15</sup> or ‘for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others’.<sup>16</sup> And the final, ‘necessary in a democratic society’, criterion has been construed by the ECtHR as requiring that restrictions on manifestations of religion/belief must be justified by a ‘pressing social need’, and thereby proportionate to their intended aim.<sup>17</sup>

A second feature of Article 9 is the key distinction drawn between the *forum internum* and *forum externum*. The term *forum internum* relates to the fact that Article 9(1) has an ‘internal’ dimension, whereby it protects a person’s ‘freedom of thought, conscience and religion’ (one’s private beliefs) in absolute terms. As the Court has observed, ‘the notion of the State sitting in judgment on the state of a citizen’s inner and personal beliefs is abhorrent’,<sup>18</sup> so the use, for example, of physical threats to force people to deny or adhere to a particular religion/belief is clearly forbidden. In contrast, the *forum externum* relates to the ‘external’ element of Article 9(1), whereby everyone has the right to manifest a ‘religion or belief’ in ‘worship, teaching, practice and observance’ and—subject to the Article 9(2) criteria—restrictions may be legitimately placed on such manifestations.

It can sometimes be difficult to make clear *forum internum/externum* distinctions. A case in point is *Buscarini and others v. San Marino*,<sup>19</sup> where the applicants were required to swear an oath on the Christian Gospels in order to take their seats in the San Marino Parliament. While it has been argued that the ECtHR should have construed the facts of this case as indicating an interference with the *forum internum* (Taylor, 2005: 130)—which would have then precluded the imposition of restrictions on the applicants’ rights—the Court refrained from considering such matters, and held instead that Article 9 had been violated because the obligation to swear an oath was not ‘necessary in a democratic society’ under Article 9(2). Thus, the ECtHR tends to view the scope of the *forum internum* in fairly narrow terms and, as Carolyn Evans points out, ‘States have to act very repressively before the Court ... will hold that they have interfered with the *forum internum*’ (Evans, 2001: 78).

## The meaning of manifestation

A third characteristic of Article 9 is that it guarantees the right to *manifest* one’s religion or belief ‘in worship, teaching, practice and observance’. In spite of its centrality to Article 9, the Convention says nothing about what *manifest* means in this context, but guidance on the matter has been provided by the ECtHR. In determining what constitutes a ‘manifestation’ of religion or belief, the Court takes the view that ‘the existence of a sufficiently close and direct nexus between the act and the underlying belief must be determined on the facts of each case’.<sup>20</sup> Thus, for example, in cases involving a Jehovah’s Witness who sought to propagate his beliefs in the community,<sup>21</sup> a Christian who wanted to display a small cross necklace at work,<sup>22</sup> and a Muslim woman who wished to wear Islamic dress in public,<sup>23</sup> the ECtHR held that all of these applicants were *manifesting* their beliefs.

It is noteworthy that the first part of Article 9(1) guarantees ‘the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion’, whereas ‘belief’ is only mentioned in the next clause, which stipulates that ‘this right includes freedom to change [one’s] religion or belief’. Accordingly, it is commonly accepted that ‘religion or belief’ should be distinguished from ‘thought and conscience’, on the basis that Article 9 protects the manifestation of ‘religion or belief’, whereas expressions of one’s ‘thought and conscience’ are protected by (and confined to) Article 10 of the Convention, which enshrines the right to freedom of expression (Evans, 2001: 52). Thus, it seems clear that ‘manifestations’ of thought and conscience (unlike manifestations of religion or belief) are *not* covered by Article 9.



## ‘Religion’, ‘belief’, and the scope of Article 9

A fourth point to note about Article 9 is that its scope is wide, for it offers protection to both religious *and* non-religious forms of belief. This was made clear by the ECtHR in *Kokkinakis v. Greece*,<sup>24</sup> where it affirmed that Article 9 constitutes ‘one of the most vital elements that go to make up the identity of believers and their conception of life ... [and] is also a precious asset for atheists, agnostics, sceptics and the unconcerned’. The twin principles of freedom *of*, as well as freedom *from*, religion or belief, are thus protected by Article 9, because the ECtHR has confirmed that Article 9 includes the ‘freedom to hold or not to hold religious beliefs and to practise or not to practise a religion’.<sup>25</sup>

The Court’s standard test for determining whether a ‘belief’ should be afforded protection under the Convention, is whether it ‘attain[s] a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance’<sup>26</sup>—and once this threshold has been met, the state may not ‘determine whether religious beliefs ... are legitimate’.<sup>27</sup> Today a wide range of philosophical beliefs, including secularism,<sup>28</sup> pacifism,<sup>29</sup> veganism,<sup>30</sup> and opposition to abortion,<sup>31</sup> come within the remit of Article 9. The protection of Article 9 has also been afforded to relatively new groups such as the Church of Scientology,<sup>32</sup> but the Court has been cautious in conspicuously avoiding any determination of whether ↴ such organizations are quintessentially ‘religious’, in publicly affirming its reluctance ‘to decide in abstracto whether or not a body of beliefs and related practices may be considered a “religion” ’ for the purposes of Article 9.<sup>33</sup>

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The ECtHR’s caution in this regard would appear to be entirely warranted, for terms such as ‘religion’ are nebulous and notoriously difficult to define. However, the question of whether the Court’s frequent caution in other contentious areas, such as that of religious dress, is an entirely different matter that will be examined later in this chapter. But first attention is focused on a striking characteristic of ECtHR jurisprudence—the significant increase in Article 9 complaints that have been referred to Strasbourg in recent years.

## ‘Court in the crossfire’: religious litigation, controversy, and the ECtHR

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### Article 9, the ECtHR, and the increase of religious litigation

The ECtHR, like many national courts across Europe, has had to deal with a significant increase in religious litigation in recent years. This can be seen as being part of a wider phenomenon that has been termed the ‘juridification of religion’ (Årshem and Slotte, 2017). In seeking to define this term, Russell Sandberg has suggested that it has three dimensions. The first is the way that the ‘law comes to regulate an increasing number of different activities’ (Sandberg, 2011: 194)—a by-product of domestic legislation like the Human Rights Act 1998, which incorporated Article 9 of the ECHR into UK law. The second concerns the ‘process whereby conflicts increasingly are being solved by or with reference to law’ (Sandberg, 2011: 195)—a state of affairs illustrated by a spike in the number of freedom of religion/belief cases ending up before judicial bodies such as the ECtHR. And Sandberg’s third dimension of the juridification of religion refers to ‘legal framing’, which he characterizes as being the way that ‘people increasingly tend to think of themselves and others as legal subjects’ (Sandberg, 2011: 195)—a characteristic of many of the litigants who have invoked Article 9 of the ECHR in Strasbourg.

Today, at a time when issues pertaining to religion and belief are firmly on the radar of the ECtHR, it is perhaps surprising to recall that for the first three decades of its existence the European Court was not called upon to make a single ruling under Article ↴ 9. Indeed, it was not until 1993 that the European Court examined Article 9 in any detail, in the case of *Kokkinakis v. Greece*,<sup>34</sup> described then (by one of its judges) as

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‘the first real proceedings brought before the European Court since its creation which concerns freedom of religion’.<sup>35</sup>

In seeking to explain why the ECtHR has received an unprecedented number of cases with a religious dimension in recent years, a number of possible reasons can be adduced. An obvious first explanation relates to the changing demography of Europe, for with the continent now home to a significant (and ever-expanding) number of minority faith traditions, many age-old European customs and traditions, based largely on Judaeo-Christian values, have been (and continue to be) subject to legal challenge (Kayaoglu, 2014). A second factor is an ever greater willingness on the part of some applicants to defend and assert ‘secular’ or non-religious forms of belief (Morini, 2010), including atheism and agnosticism. A third reason for the rise in religious litigation has been the law’s increasing recognition of the principles of non-discrimination (Petersen, 2018) and equality (Rivers, 2012), meaning that human rights law now impacts on freedom of religion in ways that were not historically so—a case in point being recent conflicts between conservative religious believers and members of LGBT+ communities (Wintemute, 2014). A fourth explanation for why the ECtHR has received a hitherto unparalleled number of complaints with a religious dimension relates to the fact that some states (predominantly in Central and Eastern Europe) continue to tolerate practices (e.g. physical attacks on religious minorities) that increase the number of litigants seeking to invoke Article 9.<sup>36</sup> And finally, as noted by Sandberg, the increase in religious litigation in Strasbourg (as in many other places elsewhere in the west) has been fuelled by the enthusiastic way in which various pressure groups (representing people advocating both freedom *of*, as well as freedom *from* religion) have sought to deploy competing human rights claims on behalf of their clients (Sandberg, 2011: 195).

This increase in religious litigation is perhaps most noticeable in regard to Article 9 challenges to religious dress bans. In recent years, there has been a steep rise in the number of cases brought, particularly by Muslim women, claiming the right to manifest their faith through their clothing, in nations where religious dress restrictions are in place. One might initially assume that a key rationale for the lodging of so many applications of this kind with the ECtHR would be the applicants’ high rate of success. Yet such an assumption would be erroneous, because, as will now be discussed, the Strasbourg Court has steadfastly refused to find violations of Article 9 in this area.<sup>37</sup>

Few issues under Article 9 have generated more controversy in recent years than that of state-sanctioned curbs on religious dress. Much of the controversy relates to the ECtHR's reluctance to find for those seeking to overturn religious dress bans. The litany of (unsuccessful) applications includes: *Dahlab v. Switzerland*, where a Swiss primary school teacher was dismissed for refusing to remove her headscarf, so as not to jeopardize school denominational neutrality;<sup>38</sup> *Şahin v. Turkey*, where a medical student was disciplined for refusing to remove her headscarf in a Turkish university, on account of the state's desire to protect secularism and gender equality;<sup>39</sup> *Ebrahimian v. France*, where the contract of a hospital social worker was not renewed because of her insistence on wearing an Islamic headscarf, in contravention of the principle of secularism and neutrality in the provision of public services;<sup>40</sup> *Dogru v. France*, where a French schoolgirl was expelled for refusing to remove her headscarf in PE lessons (for supposed health and safety reasons);<sup>41</sup> *Bayrak and others v. France*, where multiple French school children were expelled for refusing to remove their religious clothing (e.g. Islamic headscarves and Sikh *keski* or 'under-turbans') in accordance with a French Law that banned conspicuous religious clothing in schools so as to protect *laïcité*;<sup>42</sup> and *Kose and 93 others v. Turkey*, in which numerous Turkish school girls were expelled for refusing to remove their headscarves.<sup>43</sup> Religious dress applications to Strasbourg have also been rejected on other grounds, including public security<sup>44</sup> and public health,<sup>45</sup> while in the recent high-profile cases of *SAS v. France*, *Dakir v. Belgium*, and *Belcacemi and Oussar v. Belgium*, the ECtHR has held that the principle of 'living together' (*vivre ensemble*) justified its rejection of challenges to laws making it a criminal offence to cover one's face in public.<sup>46</sup>

For the (mainly female) applicants in cases such as these, the ability to manifest their faith through what they choose to wear is a fundamental right that raises issues of dignity, autonomy, and equal citizenship (Brems, 2014). For such applicants, items of religious dress are much more than a piece of cloth. The implications of this for religious freedom will now be explored in more detail.

## p. 412 **What 'religious dress' cases reveal about the ECtHR**

The ECtHR case law on religious dress, and especially that regarding legal restrictions imposed on female Muslim dress across Council of Europe states, provides us with some profound insights into the potential fragility of protection afforded to religious freedoms by Article 9. In this regard two points will be made. First, the very nature and structure of Article 9 reflects a stream in European religious history that goes back to the Reformation, and this has significant implications for those seeking to avail themselves of its protection today. Secondly, and more importantly in this context, the heavy reliance by the ECtHR in religious dress cases on the principles of subsidiarity and the margin of appreciation has had a decisive effect on the efficacy of Article 9 as a means of protecting those who wish to manifest their beliefs through the clothing they wear.

### **The structure of Article 9 revisited**

As noted above, Article 9 has an unusual structure. The *forum internum* of 'thought, conscience and religion' is afforded absolute protection. No argument of the public good entitles the state to impose, or attempt to impose, limitations on the contents of a person's internally held thoughts and beliefs. It is only when religion or belief is *manifested* that it may legitimately be limited by the state. In drawing this distinction between the *forum internum* and the *forum externum*, Article 9 recognizes that it is when beliefs emerge into the open that they may lead to harmful effects on others.<sup>47</sup>

There is, however, another consequence of Article 9's asymmetry. It is almost inevitable that those faiths in which outward displays or practices play a significant role will fare worse under Article 9 than those that place emphasis on internally held belief. After all—in respect of their 'manifestation' elements—the former type of religion or belief may legitimately be subjected to restrictions under Article 9's second paragraph (Evans, 2001: 200). It is perhaps no accident that this internal/external distinction maps onto one of the central controversies of the European Reformation of the sixteenth century: the debate over whether, in order to attain salvation, or 'justification', it was necessary to perform good works, or whether, as Martin Luther argued, salvation could be achieved by 'faith alone' (*sola fide*). As the historian Geoffrey Elton put it:

Luther held that man was justified (saved) by faith alone: the words *sola fide* came to be the watchword and touchstone of the Reformation. Man could do nothing by his own works—whether works of edification like prayer, fasting, mortification, or ↴ works of charity—to compel justification. But if he believed, God of His grace would give him ... salvation and eternal life.

(Elton, 1963: 16)

Luther's influence, and that of subsequent Protestant thinking, meant that the role of outward manifestation—especially in the form of symbolism and ritual—was significantly reduced in post-Reformation Protestant Europe (Collinson, 2006: 145). Against this historical backdrop, it is comparatively easy for a religion to fall within the scope of absolute protection afforded to the *forum internum* when its doctrine does not place emphasis on external manifestations to any great extent. And it is much more likely that religious adherents who believe it to be their duty to don certain items of clothing when entering public space will attract the restrictive attentions of the state and, moreover, will fall within the scope of the permissible limitations listed in Article 9 paragraph 2. Thus, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the structure of Article 9 itself inevitably tends to disfavour those faiths that require items of clothing or symbols to be worn by adherents in the public domain.

## Religious dress, subsidiarity, and the margin of appreciation

### The effect of subsidiarity

If the *structure* of Article 9 makes it more likely that religious dress will be susceptible to restriction by states, the same can be said, *a fortiori*, about the way in which the European Court of Human Rights has *interpreted* and *applied* the limitation provisions in the second paragraph of Article 9. The central explanation for the paucity of protection afforded to applicants claiming breaches of Article 9 because of restrictions imposed on their dress, is the operation of the doctrine of subsidiarity.

Under the ECHR system, the primary responsibility for protecting human rights rests not with the Court but with the States Parties to the Convention. In the words of the Court itself, 'the machinery of protection established by the Convention is *subsidiary* to the national systems safeguarding human rights'.<sup>48</sup> The justification for this subsidiarity is twofold. First, the domestic authorities—parliaments, governments—have *better knowledge* of local conditions and are thus in the best position to strike difficult balances between rights and competing interests; and, secondly, they have *direct democratic legitimation* in that they are voted for by the people of the country in question (Brighton Declaration, 2012; Copenhagen Declaration, 2018). The Grand Chamber of the Court summed up this rationale in the French face-veil case, *SAS v. France*:

It is ... important to emphasise the fundamentally subsidiary role of the Convention mechanism. The national authorities have direct democratic legitimation and are ... in principle better placed than an individual court to evaluate local needs and conditions. In matters of general policy, on

which opinions within a democratic society may reasonably differ, the role of the domestic policy-maker should be given special weight.<sup>49</sup>

The method by which subsidiarity is put into effect in the Court's case law is through a judicially created doctrine known as the margin of appreciation (Brighton Declaration, 2012: para 11). This is an international law doctrine of judicial self-restraint whereby leeway is given to national authorities as to how they strike difficult balances between qualified Convention rights and competing interests. It is utilized at the point in the Court's analysis where it is considering whether the interference with the protected right is 'necessary in a democratic society' in pursuit of a legitimate state aim—that is to say, when it is considering whether the interference is *proportionate* (Legg, 2012).

Subsidiarity and the margin of appreciation have been particularly prominent in cases involving religious dress. The explanation and justification for this is that across Europe, and against a background of a turbulent history of religious intolerance and conflict, individual states have reached a plethora of unique and delicate compromises in which religious freedom is protected within the context of, more or less, secular constitutional frameworks (Cumper and Lewis, 2012). Given the lack of a pan-European consensus on a common model of church–state relations, the ECtHR evidently feels ill-equipped to second-guess the balances that have been struck by domestic bodies, with their greater local knowledge and democratic legitimacy. In an oft-repeated phrase the Court has summed up its position thus:

In matters of general policy, on which opinions within a democratic society may reasonably differ widely, the role of the domestic policy-maker should be given special weight. This is the case, in particular, where questions concerning the relationship between State and religions are at stake. As regards Article 9 of the Convention, the State should thus, in principle, be afforded a wide margin of appreciation in deciding whether and to what extent a limitation of the right to manifest one's religion or beliefs is 'necessary'.<sup>50</sup>

The consequence of this 'wide margin of appreciation' is that the scrutiny of a domestic measure that interferes with a person's manifestation of their religion or belief is necessarily diminished. Indeed, in some cases at least, it is hard to avoid the suspicion that despite the ringing tones of its mantra that Article 9 constitutes a 'precious asset', the Court does not really see the value in the manifestation of belief through dress. Moreover, there has even been a suggestion (in its case law) that the Court itself may well regard certain forms of clothing, worn as a matter of religious duty, as running counter to human rights principles themselves. For example, in the case of *Leyla Şahin*—the medical student who fell foul of the ban on headscarves in Turkish universities—the ECtHR referred to the headscarf as a 'powerful external symbol' that 'might have some kind of proselytising effect seeing that it appeared to be imposed on women by a religious precept that was hard to reconcile with the principle of gender equality'.<sup>51</sup> Thus, the Court suggested, in express terms, that a religious obligation to wear types of clothing, especially when applied to women only, may be at odds with the principle of equality; and it implicitly suggested that such an obligation may run counter to the values of autonomy and dignity that provide the undergirding of international human rights norms (Universal Declaration on Human Rights Preamble, 1948). On the basis of judicial statements such as this, it is hardly surprising that, in Article 9 cases, religious manifestation through dress has often counted for little when placed in the proportionality balance against competing state interests.

In the more recent cases on the criminalization of covering the face in public places, the ECtHR has evidently moved away from its earlier position that Islamic dress was necessarily inimical to equality, dignity, and autonomy. Thus in *SAS v. France*, which concerned the blanket ban on covering the face in public places, the French Government argued, following the Court's logic in *Şahin*, that the ban was necessary to protect (inter alia) women's equality and dignity. However, in departing from its earlier position, the ECtHR said that the state was *not* entitled to invoke gender equality in order to ban a practice that is *defended by*

women themselves, for that could entail an understanding of Article 9 that would permit individuals to be protected ‘from the exercise of *their own* fundamental rights and freedoms’.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, nor could the ban be justified by arguments rooted in respect for human dignity, for while the face-veil might be ‘perceived as strange by many of those who observe it’, it nevertheless ‘is the expression of a cultural identity which contributes to the pluralism that is inherent in democracy’.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, in relation to autonomy, the Court accepted that the ban would have a ‘significant negative impact’ on women who had ‘*chosen* to wear the full face veil’ and indeed may have the effect of isolating them and *restricting their autonomy*, as well as impairing the exercise of their freedom to manifest their beliefs and their right to respect for a private life.<sup>54</sup>

p. 416 However, despite this apparent softening in its approach, the ECtHR in SAS nevertheless ultimately accepted that the criminalization of face covering fell within France’s margin of appreciation and was necessary for the ‘protection of the rights of others’, in the sense of safeguarding the ‘ground rules of social communication and more broadly the requirements of “living together”’.<sup>55</sup> The Court reasoned that France was ‘seeking ↵ to protect a principle of interaction between individuals which in its view was essential for the expression of pluralism, tolerance and broadmindedness’. It was thus held to be a democratic ‘choice of society’ to criminalize the full face veil in public places in France.<sup>56</sup>

## Blunting the proportionality analysis

A major problem with the wide margin-of-appreciation approach adopted by the ECtHR is that it tends to blunt the proportionality analysis, so that assertions by states as to the necessity of bans are accepted almost at face value, notwithstanding the absence of *evidence* that any harm has either occurred, or is likely to occur. Indeed, the comparison with the Court’s response to applications where states have banned *political* symbols that are worn or publically displayed is stark. For example, in cases involving a prosecution for wearing the Communist five-pointed star,<sup>57</sup> or displaying a political banner associated with a right-wing political movement,<sup>58</sup> the Court has afforded states only a very *narrow* margin of appreciation because of a perceived European consensus in the importance of peaceful *political* expression.

By way of contrast, however, the Court’s deferential approach in religious dress cases tends to send out a message to those (often minority applicants) wishing to manifest their beliefs through the clothing they wear, that it is of little consequence that they *themselves* are not causing harm. Such people are swept up on a broad swathe of prohibition, irrespective of the absence of any evidence either of ‘bad behaviour’ on their part, or of evidence that the bans are really necessary to meet the objectives claimed.<sup>59</sup> This inevitably results in the impression, for these applicants and their co-religionists, that their beliefs and concerns are not taken seriously either by their own state’s authorities or by the ECtHR.

## Green lights and road maps

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Perhaps even more worrisome than the dulled proportionality analysis sketched out above is the knock-on effect of judgments like *SAS* and *Şahin* with regard to the protection of Article 9 rights across the European continent. The doctrines of subsidiarity and the margin of appreciation—as they operate in the context of Article 9—are designed to afford leeway to states in order to take account of their own unique historical, political, and constitutional journeys towards becoming rights-respecting liberal democracies. They provide a mechanism by which the ECtHR can take into account the delicate balancing acts that each state, with its own unique history and constitutional arrangements, has had to perform. But there is currently a political climate in which restrictions (and calls for restrictions) on the Islamic veil have become widespread across European states *whatever* their individual historical and constitutional complexions (Michaels, 2018). In such circumstances the case law of the ECtHR in this area has effectively shown a ‘green light’ to states, providing governments and parliaments with the moral and legal justifications they need to enact such provisions. In addition, the case law of the Court has ironically provided states with legal/procedural quasi-roadmaps by which they may identify those arguments that are likely to be well received by the ECtHR and thereby implement their bans in such a way as to effectively withstand a Strasbourg challenge. Thus, governments in Europe that have introduced restrictions on religious dress, or which plan to do so in the future, will be able to ‘cherry-pick’ the arguments that have previously held sway or are likely to find favour with the Court, with the intention of withstanding any Article 9 challenge in Strasbourg.

## Conclusion

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In this chapter the issue of religious dress has been used as a lens for scrutinizing the ECtHR’s record in the field of religion and belief, and it is argued that the Court has been overly deferential to states in this area. However, this criticism of ECtHR religious dress jurisprudence is tempered, to some degree, by recognition of the significant challenges faced by the Strasbourg Court in interpreting Article 9 of the ECHR. After all, the Court has the invidious task of having ‘to consolidate universal standards of rights protection, in the face of wide national diversity and a steady stream of seemingly intractable problems’ (Stone Sweet and Keller, 2008: 3). Indeed, few areas of the ECHR are as daunting in this regard as Article 9, for the Court must seek to ensure that the Convention affords proper respect to a plethora of faiths, creeds, and philosophies in a continent that is, simultaneously, ever more religiously diverse yet increasingly secular in nature. Yet, be that as it may, the deference afforded by the Court to states in the field of religious dress by removing the effective bite from the Court’s proportionality analysis is problematic for a number of reasons.

For a start, it risks creating the impression of an overwhelmingly male court riding roughshod over the concerns of mainly female complainants. Moreover, it conveys the message that items of religious dress are little more than mere items of cloth, whereas for the believer such garments often are directly associated with their most cherished values, notions of self, and personal identity. And finally the ECtHR’s approach may foster perceptions of ‘secular fundamentalism’, which could risk further alienating those radicals in some faith communities who already have little confidence in the ability of Europe’s judges to protect their traditions (Leiken, 2012).

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The challenges posed in respect of those wishing to claim their Article 9 rights are unlikely to go away anytime soon. In the course of this chapter a softening in the approach of the Court in some of its judgments has been identified, not least in regard to its rejection of France’s arguments in *SAS* in respect of equality, dignity, and autonomy. If Article 9 is to avoid becoming a dead letter—useless in all but the most clear and obvious cases of disproportionate interference—a conscious effort needs to be made by the ECtHR to adapt its approach still further, to reduce the margin of appreciation, and to give such litigants at least a ‘fair go’ when their cases come before the Court. Like the proverbial curate’s egg, the ECtHR’s record on the right to

freedom of religion and belief is 'good in parts'. But from the perspective of individuals constrained from being able to manifest their faith by dressing as they would choose, these 'good parts' may offer scant consolation.

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45 *Chaplin v. UK* No 59842/10, hudoc, 15 January 2013.  
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47 *Kokkinakis v. Greece* (1993) 17 EHRR 397, at para 33.  
48 *Handyside v. UK* (1976) 1 EHRR 737 at para 48 (emphasis added).  
49 *SAS v. France* [2014] ECHR 695, at para 129.  
50 *Hamidović v. Bosnia Herzegovina* No. 57792/15, hudoc, 5 December 2017 at para 38.  
51 *Şahin v. Turkey* (2007) 44 EHRR 5, at para 111.  
52 *SAS v. France* [2014] ECHR 695, at para 119 (emphasis added).  
53 *SAS v. France* [2014] ECHR 695, at para 120.  
54 *SAS v. France* [2014] ECHR 695, at para 146 (emphasis added).  
55 *SAS v. France* [2014] ECHR 695, at para 153.  
56 *SAS v. France* [2014] ECHR 695, para 153.  
57 *Vajnai v. Hungary* No. 33629/06, hudoc, 8 July 2008.  
58 *Fáber v. Hungary* No. 40721/08, hudoc, 24 July 2012.  
59 See the dissent of Judge Tulkens in *Şahin v. Turkey* (2007) 44 EHRR 5.

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CHAPTER

## 24 Religion and the United Nations

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### Abstract

This chapter is concerned with religion at the United Nations (UN), and in particular how it relates to the activities of the UN at its Geneva office. In recent years, the UN has experienced growing concern about religion, including a higher profile in the General Assembly, the Security Council, and several of the UN's specialized agencies, among them the Human Rights Office, the Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, the Population Fund (UNFPA), and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. For many, this was unexpected given that it followed decades of religion's apparent marginalization at the UN. The increased presence of religious actors at the UN reflects a wider phenomenon: the deepening problems of global governance and increased calls for the UN to be 'democratized' by drawing on an array of, mainly non-state voices, both secular and religious, to supplement those of states.

**Keywords:** [United Nations](#), [Geneva office](#), [religion](#), [human rights](#), [religious freedom](#), [non-state voices](#)

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THIS chapter is concerned with religion at the United Nations, and in particular how it relates to the activities of the UN at its Geneva office. In recent years, the UN has experienced growing concern with religion, including a higher profile in the General Assembly, the Security Council, and several of the UN's specialized agencies: the Human Rights Office, the Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, the Population Fund (UNFPA), and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (Haynes, 2014, 2018; Carrette and Miall, 2017; Lehmann, 2017). For many, this was unexpected as it followed decades of religion's apparent marginalization at the UN. The increased presence of religious actors at the UN reflects a wider phenomenon: both deepening problems of global governance and increased calls for the UN to be 'democratized' by drawing on an array of mainly non-state voices, both secular and religious, to supplement those of states (Hunter, 2016; Carrette and Miall, 2017).

The chapter is structured as follows: the first section examines the 'return of religion' to international relations and explains how it affects the UN and what the organization does. The second section focuses on the UN's European headquarters in Geneva and its emphasis on human rights, including religious freedom.

The third section turns to another long-term UN concern at both Geneva and New York: the sexual and reproductive health rights of women, and the impact of religious voices at the UN, including at the UN's Europe office in Geneva. The overall purpose of the chapter is not only to explain why there is more religious activity at the UN compared with the organization's early decades. In addition, the case studies in the second and third sections explain the controversial nature of the role of religion at the UN, with numerous actors, both state and non-state, seeking to influence outcomes in relation to contentious issues of global governance.

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## The United Nations and the 'return of religion' to international relations

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In February 2020 the total number of UN staff was over 44,000, and the number of UN agencies, bodies, offices, and departments easily amounted to sixty, each with its own staff and many with headquarters and field offices.<sup>1</sup> In short, the UN is a huge entity with multiple facets and a plethora of forms, acting on every conceivable aspect of human development. Many religious non-governmental organizations (RNGOs), however, either refer to this organism as though it were one homogeneous entity or complain about the confusion engendered by so many bodies all being part of 'the UN'. This is a very real concern, the reason being that without a deep knowledge of the system, which many in the UN themselves struggle to acquire, it can take a lifetime to understand whom exactly to reach out to, let alone partner with, and how best to do this (Karam, 2012: 11). More generally, religious values and concerns help to inform and shape decision-making; there is, therefore, a real need for more public awareness of the work and significance of religious actors at the UN in achieving (or sometimes subverting) the goals of justice and human rights (Carrette and Miall, 2017).

The UN is an institution in which solutions to global problems are debated and sometimes crafted. But at a deeper level, the UN is also a place where the international community attempts to identify commonly shared values. As Puchala, Laatikainen, and Coate (2007: 17) go on to argue, however, agreeing on universal values in an organization of 193 Member States composed of thousands of ethnic, religious, and cultural groups is difficult.

As already indicated, the UN is a very detailed, complex, and intricate organization (United Nations System, n.d.). It follows that any focus at the UN, including the involvement of many different religious actors, must necessarily be selective. Comprehensive coverage would require far more space than a chapter of modest proportions. Overall, however, Carrette and Miall (2017) point to the controversial nature of religious involvement at the UN, with a lack of clarity about what role religion 'should' play. This is unsurprising in that the UN is an organization long characterized by secular norms and values, which not only shunned religion but excluded it from its deliberations (Haynes, 2014, 2018). As Puchala, Laatikainen, and Coate (2007) explain, the involvement of religious—as well as ethnic and cultural—concerns at the UN makes it hard to come up with and act in line with the shared UN values as expressed in the foundational UN Charter from the mid-1940s.

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Controversy about the role of religion at the UN reflects a wider understanding that religion now has a relatively high profile in international relations (Fox and Sandler, 2004; Thomas, 2005; Haynes, 2013; Sandal and Fox, 2013). For some, the current international significance of religion is great enough to warrant the term 'global religious resurgence' (Thomas, 2005). This has two main connotations. First, it implies a growing public voice for religion, in the sense that issues are increasingly viewed or framed through a religious lens. Second, religious leaders and intellectuals, such as Pope Francis, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, or the Dalai Lama, publicly express concerns on an array of global issues, including economic and social justice and how to achieve this, especially for the world's poor. Indeed, a

whole host of religious leaders and RNGOs proclaims a desire to make societies more just, more equal, and more focused on spiritual issues. To seek to achieve these objectives, they use a variety of tactics and methods. Some, like the Anglican Church in England, lobby, protest, and publish reports at the level of civil society. Others, such as Pope Francis, use the opportunities afforded by high-level meetings with government leaders to pursue their objectives. What encourages such religious leaders to voice their social and economic concerns and try to improve things? Peter Berger maintains that what they have in common is a critique of secularity, because human 'existence bereft of transcendence is an impoverished and finally untenable condition' (Berger, 1999: 4). For Berger a human desire for transcendence—that is, a state of being or existence above and beyond the limits of material experience—is an integral part of the human psyche, and secularity—that is, the condition or quality of being secular—does not allow for this necessary sense of transcendence. Berger avers that without a sense of transcendence, life for many people is unsatisfactorily empty.

The 'return' of religion to international relations implies that Enlightenment belief was mistaken: that is, that all societies would inevitably secularize along identical or closely related linear pathways, leading to uniformly similar ways of 'modernizing'. Rather, the effects of modernization and globalization interact with a growing lack of faith in secular ideologies (such as, communism, socialism, and liberal democracy)—a combination which leaves many people with feelings of alienation and loss. The result is a wide-ranging (re)turn to seeking after transcendence, often focused in religious 'vehicles', not necessarily associated with the traditionally dominant religious faiths.

In short, secularization involves a sense of alienation by undermining 'traditional' value systems and allocating opportunities in highly unequal ways within and among nations. This in turn encourages a new search for identity to give life meaning and purpose. The overall result in recent decades has been a wave of resurgent religious expressions, with far-reaching implications for social integration, political stability, and, in some cases, regional and international peace and security. Today, these expressions occur in a variety of countries with differing political and ideological systems, at different levels of economic development, and with diverse religious traditions. All have been subject to the destabilizing pressures of state-directed modernization and secularization; in other words, all are experiencing to some degree what is frequently termed 'the postmodern condition'—characterized by a lack of clarity and certainty about the future direction of society.

p. 423 Resurgent religion does not relate only to personal beliefs. It can also lead to a desire in both individuals and groups to grapple with what are perceived as interlinked social, economic, and political issues. 'Because it is so reliable a source of emotion', ↪ (Tarrow, 1998: 112) remarks, 'religion is a recurring source of social movement framing. Religion provides ready-made symbols, rituals, and solidarities that can be accessed and appropriated by movement leaders.' Such expressions can be found in many different faiths and sects, and many share a key characteristic: a desire to change domestic, and in some cases international, outcomes, to 'do good' or 'do better' by projecting the influence of their religious faith into this-world action. Religious actors adopt various tactics to try to achieve their goals, at various levels of organization. Some protest, lobby, or otherwise engage with decision makers at home or abroad. Others focus reform intentions through the ballot box or via civil society. Finally, numerous religious actors of various kinds seek to engage in current political, economic, and social debates, including at the UN and other global and regional fora (Haynes, 2014, 2018).

In addition to the numerous attempts by religious actors to involve themselves productively in global governance, it is important to note the destabilizing effects of particular individuals motivated by religious belief: none more so than the Islamist terrorists who attacked a variety of 'targets' in the USA on 11 September 2001 (Haynes, 2018). Second, and more generally, there is the destabilizing impact of globalization, highlighting a need for improved global governance to deal with myriad problems, including the rise of religion-linked terrorism and extremism. Yet, despite much emphasis on the destructive,

conflictual elements of religion in global politics, its overall international impact is not easily interpreted. On the one hand, inter- and intra-religion conflicts in many regions and countries are a significant source of domestic and international strife, attracting much media attention. On the other, it is often suggested that if 'benign' and 'cooperative' religious principles and practices could be applied consistently in the reduction of conflict, then what Falk (2004: 137) calls 'emancipatory religious and spiritual perspectives in world order thinking and practice' might improve at least some of the outcomes. Falk claims that what is needed is a shift to what he calls 'humane global governance', that is, an improved ethical regime, informed by both religious and secular insights. The UN, as the world's leading supranational organization, provides a key forum for the discussion and potential resolution of problems of global governance.

Difficulties in discovering adequate responses to issues of global concern often result in criticism of the UN (Puchala, Laatikainen, and Coate, 2007). Founded in 1945, the UN is a state-centric entity primarily concerned with international security and cooperation. For the UN, 9/11 was a profound challenge, reflecting a new focus of conflict in international relations (that is, inter-cultural/inter-religious conflict) which it was not obviously equipped to deal with, but nevertheless was expected to resolve. Following 9/11, there were frequent references at the UN, including in the General Assembly and Security Council, not only to religion's perceived links to extremism and conflict but also to the necessity of improving inter-faith dialogue in order to address them (Haynes, 2014; Carrette and Miall, 2017; Lehmann, 2017). What was the likelihood that the UN, from its creation in 1945 as an emphatically secular, state-centric organization, would offer religion a forum, to the same extent as secular approaches, in the search for improved global governance? At first glance, this seemed unlikely, given that historically ↵ the UN has paid little or no sustained attention to religion in its deliberations. Certainly, there are no mechanisms at the UN for religion necessarily to have voice in the UN's ways of working, much less a role in its decision making. While there is a mention of religion in the founding UN Charter, this is a passing reference only to freedom of belief as a fundamental human right. That said, the UN's focus on human rights has in recent years become a major area of dispute, with different sets of values in competition in what has been labelled 'the politics of culture' (Puchala, Laatikainen, and Coate, 2007: 128–35; see also Bob, 2012).

The UN now acknowledges a direct link between development shortfalls and the rise of international terrorism and violent extremism. This extends the UN's concern with human rights to an understanding that for human rights to be properly effective would require immediate and comprehensive action to deal with endemic development shortfalls in the world's poorest countries. This was reflected in the UN's commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) from 2000 to 2015, and their successor, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from 2015 to 2030. The SDGs have already achieved iconic status at the UN, and much of its current work, expressed across dozens of the UN's specialized agencies, focuses on achieving the ambitious aims inherent in the SDGs.

Strong commitment to the SDGs and the related Agenda 2030 underlines the UN's recognition that to achieve improved, more equitable, international outcomes, for example, in relation to poverty alleviation and development, it needs to do more than deliver moral and ethical rhetoric alone (Haynes, 2019). As Lynch (2012) notes, the UN's renewed focus on international development shortfalls has moved the debate from initially moral dimensions to material factors, including: the 'neoliberal competition of the "market" [in] international development'. From there, it is but a short step to consider how globalization encourages or exacerbates an already unjust and polarized world, from which the already wealthy benefit disproportionately. This reflects the fact that the decades since the Cold War ended in the late 1980s have been a time of both deepening globalization and increased polarization between rich and poor. And as already noted, this coincided with religion's increased international impact, which overlaps in turn with the growing prominence of ethical and moral concerns expressed in demands for better global governance, inviting improved values, norms, and behaviours. However, as Puchala, Laatikainen, and Coate (2007: 117) note, 'questions of values [at the UN] get politically transformed into issues of hegemony, autonomy,

privilege, and power'. This is a way of saying that concerns with values, norms, and behaviours cannot be seen in isolation from how the UN is structured and how power is expressed and wielded by the chief power holders: powerful states.

p. 425 While there are no institutionalized mechanisms through which non-state actors, including religious entities, can affect UN decisions and policies, this does not stop religious views and opinions being regularly expressed at the UN—not least by the hundreds of RNGOs registered with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) (Baumgart-Ochse *et al.*, 2019). Many of these RNGOs focus on ethical and moral controversies, and are frequently galvanized into action by what they see as the unwelcome impact of post-Cold War globalization on relations between rich and poor and the associated international development shortfalls. Other issues of concern for many RNGOs include: 'climate change, global finance, disarmament, inequality, pan-epidemics and human rights' (Carrette and Miall, 2017: 3).

Many UN leaders now seem aware of the power of religion to move individuals and groups to action, in both normatively 'good' and 'bad' ways. For example, in June 2018, the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, publicly recognized the importance of the societal role of religious leaders, at a time when racism, intolerance, and discrimination were all on the rise. Guterres saluted what he regarded as the shared commitment of many religious leaders to human rights and, in particular, to equal citizenship (Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global Dialogue, 2018). In addition, and in line with a growing understanding that the UN is too 'top-down' in its focus—that is, overly remote from the concerns of 'ordinary people'—Guterres also expressed his desire that, institutionally, the UN would make more effort to work with 'civil society', in both its secular and religious manifestations, as a means to improve global governance outcomes. For Guterres, 'civil society is a key instrument for the success of today's UN', particularly in a global political climate 'where governments are finding it more and more difficult to do their job' (UNA-UK, 2016).

## The United Nations and religious freedom

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Since its founding in 1945, the UN has stressed the importance of 'human rights', with the emphasis on the rights of the individual, rather than systematic reform of global power relations to improve the rights of collective actors, including weak states. Such concerns were reflected in a May 2017 statement by Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, then head of a UN entity, the Alliance of Civilizations:

We must collectively draw strength from the spirit of the UN Charter to better prevent armed conflict and sustain peace through intercultural dialogue, social inclusion and development. And this means ensuring the effective protection of all human rights – civil, political, economic, social and cultural.

(United Nations Press Release, 2017)

p. 426 The UN's office in Geneva is the home of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the leading UN entity on human rights. The UN human rights programme aims to ensure that the protection and enjoyment of human rights is a reality in the lives of all people. The programme also plays a crucial role in safeguarding the integrity of the three interconnected pillars of the UN—peace and security, human rights, and development. Although religion is not mentioned as one of the featured concerns of the OHCHR, it is clear that issues to do with religion—such as, religious freedom, a core value of the UN—is potentially linked to peace and security, human rights, and development.

In 1981, the UN General Assembly passed the *Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief*. The Declaration was not endowed with the force of international



law. Nevertheless, it was the first international legal instrument devoted solely to religious freedom. Since then, the UN's Geneva activities have prioritized this issue. To pursue the goals of the 1981 resolution and to focus support for the general evolution of the freedom of religion as a human right, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights established the position of Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance. The name of the office was changed in 2000 by the UN Commission on Human Rights to its current title: Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief. The purpose of the name change was to try to capture more precisely the role of the Special Rapporteur in protecting the rights of individuals to change religion or abstain from religious belief. In some religious faiths in some countries, this is a particularly difficult task to accomplish. Sometimes an attempt to convert from Islam to another religion is seen as blasphemous and the wider issue of blasphemy has been a long-running issue of much controversy at the UN.

In September 2016, the then United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Heiner Bielefeldt,<sup>2</sup> in collaboration with the World Council of Churches and Finnish Ecumenical Council, organized a major conference at the UN in Geneva on the topic of 'Religion and Religious Freedom in International Diplomacy'. The workshop concluded that it is necessary for improved religious freedom and human rights more generally:

- to understand the use of religion in foreign policies including in development and humanitarian aid;
  - to sensitize the need of both 'literacies' on religions and religious freedom in international diplomacy and foreign policies;
  - to find ways to contribute to the advancement of religious literacy and freedom of religion or belief.
- (OHCHR, 2016)

p. 427 The growing importance of religion in the human rights concerns of the UN is to some extent also the case within the EU. The EU has long engaged with secular non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and today there are growing links with numerous RNGOs (Leustean, 2013). The EU now regularly engages with selected RNGOs which share its principles, as their ideological commitment to EU core values is seen as highly valuable to the EU's overall soft power project of greater regional and global impact. Picking up on the EU's lead, many RNGOs now assert overtly their commitment to the EU's values, in a manner similar to how many engage with the UN (Haynes, 2014, 2018). In addition, reflecting the significance of globalization, many EU-based RNGOs are transnational in focus and activity, expanding their activities from national to regional and international fora, including to the UN and other international bodies. In doing so, their aim is to influence public policy in relation to various issues, typically centring on aspects of human rights, including religious freedom (McCrea, 2013). The EU is also keen to interact with 'like-minded' RNGOs, in its search for 'improved' values to mould public policy and governance; what RNGOs bring to the table is a focus on ethics and morals which, many people feel, has been missing from politics in Europe, including at the EU, to the region's detriment (Böllmann, 2013).

All that said, in July 2010 Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, underlined that the EU is a 'secular' organization. Van Rompuy added, however, that Europe, via the EU, should seek to exhibit greater 'moral significance', implying the desirability of increased 'spiritual and religious input'. In addition, he asserted that the 'European Union has to be a union of values. That is our added value in the world. That is the soft power of Europe in the world' (Swalec, 2010). How is it possible to explain Van Rompuy's assertion that the EU 'should' be a moral actor, drawing on foundational Christian historical and cultural attributes, reflecting both 'spiritual and religious input'? Crucially, Van Rompuy links the importance of such 'values' to the EU's 'soft power', implying that faith can make a significant contribution in this regard.

Van Rompuy's contribution was not the only one stemming from an authoritative European source, in a development which paralleled the growing importance of spiritual, moral and ethical issues at the UN.

Three years earlier, in September 2007, the then EU Commission President, José Manuel Barroso, had highlighted the importance of the EU developing from ‘a community of interests to a community of values and asked for the support of the Church organizations in that process’ (Vlieger and Tananescu, 2012: 448). The concerns of Van Rompuy and Barroso were reflected in the Treaty of Lisbon (2007) which stated: ‘Recognizing their identity and their specific contribution, the Union shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with these Churches and organizations’ (Treaty of Lisbon, 2007: Article 15b.3). In sum, public policy and governance in the EU are today significantly informed by both moral and ethical issues, often with faith connotations, especially those deriving from Europe’s historically and culturally dominant faith: Christianity.

The UN’s activities at Geneva do not clearly reflect such a change of emphasis. Sticking to the notion that religious freedom is a ‘human right’, the UN is not (yet) comfortable with overt and consistent allusions to religious principles. Whereas Europe has its Christian foundational values, the UN’s values are still officially secular and the organization continues to defend those values even though there is de facto a growing role for religion at the UN (Carrette and Miall, 2017).

## **The sexual and reproductive health rights of women at the UN**

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Whether in New York or Geneva, RNGOs and their secular counterparts rely on value-based arguments to pursue their objectives at the UN. To make their case in relation to a controversial issue, such as women’s sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), both ‘conservative’ and ‘liberal’ RNGOs focus on issues expressed in secular language: such as, ‘family values’ and ‘right to life’ versus ‘a woman’s right to choose’. They necessarily employ secular approaches because the UN is primarily a liberal, secular forum, where debates, discussions, and decisions on human rights and social justice take place in a secular context. Consequently, it is unrealistic to expect to make progress by expressing such arguments in religious terminology and values (based, for example, on community, personal responsibility, and traditional patriarchal understandings of the family and a woman’s place within it). Because both ‘liberal’ and ‘conservative’ RNGOs would struggle to get religion-based arguments taken seriously at the UN, they express their arguments in secular terms and on occasion work closely with secular actors who share their goals (Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf, 2019).

‘Conservative’ RNGOs at the UN oppose what they regard as unacceptably ‘liberal’ SRHR policies, by championing an ambiguous goal: the protection of what they call ‘family values’. This enables them not only to overcome religious differences—for example, between different groups of Christians (Protestant Evangelicals, Catholics, Orthodox Christians, and Mormons) and conservative Sunni Muslims from a variety of countries including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan (Bob, 2012: 37)—but also to find key ‘code words’ (‘family’, ‘right to life’) expressing conservative religious values in suitably secular language. Not to do so would result in only ‘limited access to discursive and institutional opportunities at the UN’ (Huntington, 2007, cited in Kayaoğlu, 2014: 78). Conservative RNGOs also seek to counter what they refer to as the ‘pro-abortion’ lobby—that is, liberal groups’ agendas and declarations. They seek to do this by blocking or weakening ‘pro-choice’ language at the UN and in associated UN documents and publications. Conservative RNGOs also adjust the framework of their discussions by arguing for concepts such as the ‘natural family’ (that is a man, a woman, and children), while referring to God as the ‘creator’ in order to bypass theological differences and employ suitably ‘non-Christian’ terminology (Kayaoğlu, 2014: 78).

The strategy of conservative RNGOs in relation to women’s SRHR developed from the early 1990s. The starting point was two UN conferences, with the themes of ‘population and development’ (Cairo, 1994) and ‘women and gender’ (Beijing, 1995). Preparations for and attendance at both Cairo and Beijing were foundational in creating, developing, and embedding networks of conservative RNGOs at the UN. At Beijing,

‘conservatives claimed that lesbians had launched a “direct attack on the values, cultures, traditions and religious beliefs of the vast majority of the world’s peoples”’ (Bob, 2012: 2, quoting Human Rights Watch, 2005: 84–5). Together, the two conferences marked the beginning of a concerted pro-conservative campaign in relation to women’s SRHR, which was initiated and led by Pope John Paul II, the Vatican, and conservative Catholic RNGOs. In short, as J. K. T. Chao (1997: 48) notes, from this time ‘the Catholic Church became a leading actor on the conservative wing’. The Church’s headship role propelled the then pope, John Paul II, a social conservative, to overall guidance of the international, conservative, and faith-based struggle against pro-choice interpretations of women’s SRHR. The principal motivation for conservative Catholics was the presumption inherent in the ‘pro-choice’ worldview that human beings have the right to decide life and death issues. In their own interpretation of Catholic teachings, the conservatives believe that only God has the right to make such decisions, that is, to choose whether a baby (or infant) lives or dies. Thus, conservative Catholic ire is directed against ‘what the secular world would call progressive: “the notion, for example that humans share with God the right to decide who will and who will not be born”’ (Chao, 1997: 48). This is not to imply however that to be Catholic is *necessarily* to be conservative. Instead, there is polarization between ‘conservative’ and ‘liberal’ Catholics, with the former numerically larger among RNGOs, including the Holy See. As Norad (2013: 11) notes: ‘Catholic NGOs with ECOSOC accreditation range from the liberal “pro-choice” activist group Catholics for choice [sic] to the most fervent “pro-life” campaigners in American Life League.’

The conservative Catholic campaign is supported by other, non-Catholic, religious conservatives, notably US-based Protestant evangelicals and conservative Muslim leaders and their organizations from various countries. Clifford Bob (2012: 36–7) refers to this alliance as the ‘Baptist–burqa’ link and notes that [m]embers of the “Baptist–burqa” network ... cooperate transnationally on policy goals’.<sup>3</sup> The augmentation of the original conservative Catholic-led campaign with additional conservative faith involvement highlights not only a shared conservative ideological orientation but also their diverse geographical locations which, as a result of globalization and the UN as a focus of concerns, is no barrier to the organization and development of collective campaigns. For example, Italian traditionalist Catholics work with conservative Muslims from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan, while US-based evangelical Protestants and Mormons add their efforts to the ‘traditional families’ drive. However, these diverse people are united not by shared religious faith but by a common understanding that it is necessary to weaken or water down or, better still, block pro-women’s choice language in UN debates, discussions, and any resulting documents.

The impact of RNGOs at the UN in relation to women’s SRHR is notable. However, the most important player at the UN in relation to pro-women’s choice is the (secular) UN Population Fund (UNFPA). UNFPA has partnerships with more than 400 different RNGOs in over 100 countries (UNFPA, 2008). In recent years, the organization has sought to build links with various faith leaders, including Muslim imams in Sub-Saharan Africa and Bangladesh (‘Married adolescents ignored in global agenda, says UNFPA’, 2004).<sup>4</sup> UNFPA also collaborates more widely with faith leaders in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as taking part in educational programmes and programmes to advance women’s SRHR.

Collaborations between UNFPA and faith leaders became plausible when both accepted that, working alone, neither had the answer to development quandaries, including the most crucial: the often-lowly position of women in many developing countries. As part of its organizational programme, UNFPA convened a ‘Global Forum on Faith-based Organizations for Population and Development’ in Istanbul on 20 and 21 October 2008. The meeting drew together 160 key participants who had taken part in earlier regional meetings held in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, the Pacific, ‘Arab states’, and Latin America and the Caribbean between December 2007 and September 2008. The Istanbul meeting brought together not only faith leaders but also representatives from various UN agencies, including UNFPA, the World Health Organization, International Labor Organization, UN-Habitat, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, United Nations

Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Development Program, and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNFPA, 2009). The purpose was to discuss successful practices and ways to move forward in partnership with UNFPA in the following areas as they relate to women and girls: reproductive health and rights, gender equality, and population and development issues. The Istanbul conference ended with the launch of a Global Interfaith Network on Population and Development, with RNGO leaders and representatives—from Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and Sikh communities—pledging commitment to strengthen cooperation on human rights and development, especially as they relate to girls and women (UNFPA, 2009). In recent years, the UNFPA has worked with a variety of religious leaders and organizations in pursuit of its goal of improved outcomes for women in the developing world (UNFPA, 2015).

## Conclusion

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Religion's increased impact on global affairs has stimulated an understanding that today's international relations are not exclusively secular. Instead, international relations are now significantly affected by religious norms, beliefs, and values, leading to what some identify as 'postsecular' international relations. Reflecting these concerns, the UN has moved over time from a position where 'religion' was effectively absent from its deliberations to one where it is more prominent in a range of concerns, including human rights. This is particularly clear in relation to the activities of the UN's Geneva office, which is significantly concerned with issues of religious freedom. More generally, ↵ global public policy debates and discussions at the UN have undergone a shift in emphasis from exclusively secular and material to the inclusion of moral and ethical issues, which frequently overlap with faith-based concerns.

Compared with the UN's early decades, the organization is now replete with religion-influenced activities, with many opportunities for the voices of religion to make themselves heard. These include the activities of a 'religious state', the Holy See, as well as those of the world's second biggest intergovernmental organization, the Organization for Islamic Cooperation, together with important regional organizations, such as the EU, as well as hundreds of RNGOs registered with ECOSOC (Carrette and Miall, 2017; Haynes, 2018; Baumgart-Ochse and Wolf, 2019). It is equally true that religious entities have not adapted to the UN's secular culture merely to survive—but instead have successfully developed their own identities and in most cases, have retained a focus on the religious or the spiritual in their beliefs and practices.

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## Notes

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- 1 ‘United Nations Careers’, available at <https://careers.un.org/lbw/home.aspx?viewtype=VD>.
- 2 At the time of writing, February 2020, Ahmed Shaheed (Maldives) is the UN Special Rapporteur. He took up the role on 1 November 2016.
- 3 Seeing mutual benefit in working together via a shared concern with ‘pro-family values’, the ‘Baptist-burqa’ coalition manages to endure, overcoming such setbacks as 9/11, whose impact otherwise was to divide the Christian and Muslim worlds from each other.
- 4 Author’s interview with Azza Karam, Senior Advisor on Culture at UNFPA, Georgetown University, Washington DC, 20 November 2011.



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## The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Europe

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### CHAPTER

## 25 Roman Catholicism and Europe

Petr Kratochvíl

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### Abstract

This chapter explores the complex relationship between the Catholic Church and Europe over many centuries. It argues that the Catholic Church and Europe played a mutually constitutive role in the early Middle Ages and one would not be conceivable without the other. However, the Church gradually disassociated itself from Europe and vice versa. Since the Reformation, but even more strongly in the last two centuries, the Church's attitude to Europe has become markedly more ambivalent, due to the rise of the European state, the hostile attitude of the Church to modern European social and political thought, Europe's ongoing secularization, and the increasingly global nature of the Catholic Church. While the tension between the Church and Europe persists, the process of European unification marked a watershed in the Church's relationship to Europe, given that integration is a key area in which the Church strongly supports the political developments of the continent.

**Keywords:** Catholic Church, Christianity, Europe, secularization, European state, European integration

**Subject:** History of Religion, Religion

**Series:** Oxford Handbooks

TO speak about Europe is to speak about Catholicism and to speak about Catholicism is to speak about Europe. As controversial as this claim about the relationship between the Catholic Church and the European continent may be, it contains more than a grain of truth. European identity and that of the Catholic Church have evolved in a mutual symbiosis and neither would look the way it does without the other. However, although the roots of the two entities are intertwined, Europe and the Catholic Church have developed in rather different ways: the current Catholic Church is fast becoming less Eurocentric while Europe is continuing on its path to secularization. Indeed, their mutual relationship has always been as much one of ambivalence, struggle, and at times outright hostility as it has of symbiosis and cultural enrichment. The ambivalence, moreover, is now stronger than ever: the concern that the representatives of the Catholic Church express about the Europe of today is perfectly matched by the modern, post-Enlightenment European mind's attitude towards the Church as the vessel of outdated conservatism and prejudice.

This chapter is divided into eight sections. It starts with a brief caveat about the sensitive relationship between (originally) European social enquiry and the Catholic Church. Second, the chapter offers a brief

historical overview of the mutually constitutive roles the Catholic Church and Europe played in the early Middle Ages. This is followed, third, by the analysis of the gradual disassociation of the Church from Europe and Europe from the Church. Fourth, the chapter explores in more detail the tension between the Church's European context and its universal mission, including the complex and at times rather dark chapter of the Church's involvement in Europe's colonial expansion. The fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth sections focus on the relations between ↪ the Catholic Church and the project of European integration. They look successively at papal thought on European unification, popular Catholic views of the European project, and at the political and legal aspects of the relations between the Church and the European Communities/European Union (EU).

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## A caveat: the study of Catholicism in European social science

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As important as the contribution of the Catholic Church is to the emergence and evolution of Europe as a distinct cultural and political space, the study of the Church's role in Europe has been marked by the pronounced distrust of modern European social sciences, and to some extent the humanities, vis-à-vis religion. In a number of disciplines, ranging from history to sociology to political science, religion was either downplayed or seen as a problem that had to be 'solved' whereby the solution often lay in removing religion from the public arena or even in the replacement of religion by science (Comte, 1989). The self-understanding of modern European social science as the antithesis of metaphysical beliefs made the study of Catholicism even more difficult than that of other religious entities, as the Catholic Church was often seen as the embodiment of just such religious 'superstition' (Stark, Iannaccone, and Finke, 1996). The result was the relegation of Christianity to the sphere of private beliefs which was traditionally (but wrongly) considered apolitical.

The reasons why the attempts to depoliticize Roman Catholicism were particularly strong and certainly stronger than in the case of the Protestant churches are manifold: the Catholic Church was a well-organized, politically independent transnational institution with a comprehensive ideology and a strong universalizing ethos which rendered it less susceptible both to the ethos of nationalism and to the political pressure of the state. The stress put on the difference between the individualistic tendencies of modern liberalism and the collective nature of religious rituals further heightened this tension. That said, there were times when the Catholic Church was equally hostile both to the nation-state and to progressive liberal reforms, including the acceptance of fundamental human rights (cf., for instance, the (in)famous struggle between Catholic modernists and integralists, Poulat, 1969). As a result, the loyalty of Catholics towards the states of which they were citizens was long seen as doubtful.

Even when Catholicism returned to the limelight of scholarly enquiry after it became clear that the influence of the Church in the public sphere could not be denied, the focus has been skewed towards traditional issues — those which social scientists and policy makers considered as typically church-related. For this reason, the literature is particularly rich and diverse as far as the church-state relations are concerned. Without much exaggeration it can be argued that as late as the 1980s, the Catholic Church was, in some scholarly disciplines, treated as if the pope were still the *prigioniero del Vaticano* and as if the Second Vatican Council had never happened. This attitude was particularly ↪ pronounced in political science and in the study of global politics. Even the pluralists who emerged in the latter field in the 1970s and who explored the essential but often neglected role of non-state actors in world politics (Little, 2002) felt able to ignore the single largest non-state actor in the world, that is, the Church itself. (For a critique of this disciplinary bias and the early accounts of the so-called turn to religion in international relations, see Fox, 2001; Petito and Hatzopoulos, 2003; Fox and Sandler, 2004.)

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Only with the revival of interest in religion across social sciences and humanities since the millennium, have numerous studies started to emerge, which explore the role that the Church has played as an influential transnational actor whose geopolitical strategies can substantially impact the fight against poverty, and contribute to conflict resolution across a number of countries. Similarly, the role of the Church as an ally at the United Nations or in the struggle against the climate change has only recently become a topic. All this pertains particularly strongly to Europe and accounts for the fact that the Catholic influence on present-day Europe and its socio-economic and political situation, and in particular on the current shape of European integration, are still relatively new topics of study.

## Catholic origins of Europe, European origins of Catholicism

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The evolution of the Catholic Church towards a church body which defines itself as different from, independent of, and, in a certain sense, even superior to the Orthodox churches in the East is inextricably linked with the emergence of Europe as a culturally and politically defined entity. Indeed, a self-confident papacy from Gregory the Great (590–604) onwards built its influence not primarily on good ties with the Eastern Roman emperors but on the conversion of and influence over the Germanic Franks, Lombards and Visigoths (Richards, 2014, see also Leyser, 2016). In particular the alliance of the papacy with the Franks in the eighth and ninth centuries and the gradual emancipation from Byzantium led to the establishment of an independent papal territory and, after several centuries, relative security for Rome and its surroundings (Hanson, 1990).

It was in these mutual cultural, political, and religious interactions between both the popes and the (Eastern Roman) emperors, and the popes and the Empire of Charlemagne (768–814) that the very definitions were born not only of what it means to be European but also of what it means to be Catholic. In this sense, Catholic Christianity truly fulfilled its ‘foundational role vis-à-vis Europe’ (Benedict XVI, 2007). When the title ‘Emperor of the Romans’ was bestowed on Charlemagne by Pope Leo III (795–816) in 800, it was not only an attempt to reclaim the imperial title for the West, but also to posit the pope as the key figure in the political decision making about who should be crowned the emperor in the future. The rise of the papacy as an influential spiritual leader of the West thus went hand in hand with the papacy’s growing political claims.

p. 440   ↳ This spiritual–secular duality had been present in the Catholic Church for a long time and for a number of reasons. The connection between the two domains was always visible: the title of pontifex maximus, which was still considered an imperial title under Constantine (306–37) passed step by step to ecclesial leaders, in particular the popes, as early as Leo I (440–61).

In this way, Europe gradually (and in particular after the suppression of Arianism) became co-extensive with the spiritual–political reach of the Roman Church. From Carolingian times onwards, Europe also delimited the new cultural as well as political unity of the West against Eastern Christianity and increasingly also against Islam. While geographically, Europe was later redefined without respect to the religious–cultural boundaries, the understanding of Europe as the Latin West has remained alive until today, not least in the Orientalist stereotypes of Western Europeans towards the non-Catholic parts of Europe, such as the Balkans or Russia. But the connection between ‘Europe’ and the Frankish Empire has influenced non-Europeans too. It is no accident that the Persian expression Frangistan has its historical roots precisely in this newly forged unity between the papacy and the Franks (Burke, 1980).

# De-Catholicization of Europe and de-Europeanization of the Catholic Church

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The dominance of Catholicism in Europe as the essential spiritual force remained effectively unchallenged during the following centuries. The main political conflicts of the high and late Middle Ages, such as the investiture controversy and the Western schism, did not substantially weaken the papacy and nor did the medieval 'heretical' movements which, while locally influential and persistent, never truly challenged the position of the Catholic Church (for the detailed account of the investiture struggle see Zippelius, 2009; for an overview of the 'heretical' movements see Lambert, 2002; Thomsett, 2011). Similarly, the medieval peasant rebellions, while posing both a socio-economic and religious challenge, did not shake the authority of the Church. The success of the Church was not, however, accompanied by political unity, which seemed forever lost after the division of the Frankish empire. The idea of a universal Christian (i.e. Catholic) monarchy gradually lost its appeal and, in the high and late Middle Ages, Holy Roman Emperors from Charles IV (r. 1346–78) onwards realized the futility of such an endeavour. As a result, the ideal of the political unity of Europe retreated to the background but the specific definition of Europe as the sum of Catholic territories remained in place until the arrival of Protestant Reformation.

p. 441 The Reformation, however, changed everything as far as the links between the Church and Europe are concerned, and after the Council of Trent (1545–63), a new Catholic Church emerged (McNally, 2009). The Catholic Counter-Reformation, which followed, should not, however, be exclusively seen as a reaction to Reformation, but rather as the consequence of the same broad intellectual developments of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: the patristic revival in particular, but also the need to come to grips with a rediscovered humanist anthropology. Although the Counter-Reformation was relatively successful in reviving the Church, the Catholic Church ceased to be the main spiritual representative of European civilization. From this moment onwards, the relationship between the Catholic Church and Europe (and European societies) gained an undertone of ambivalence. Under various guises, moreover, the theme of Europe as a prodigal son has remained alive in the Catholic discourse on Europe until today: Europe turned away from its Mother and while the Church still cherishes Europe and hopes for its return, the Catholic-European unity lingers only as an unfulfilled promise.

In the early modern period, the decline of the secular power of the Church continued and the ambivalence was, more often than not, replaced by the outright compliance of the popes with the wishes of the European monarchs. In particular, the eighteenth century saw a substantial decline of the influence of the Catholic Church (and the papacy) in Europe. Even in the Catholic parts of the continent, the ever stronger and more centralized absolute monarchies successfully seized control of the national Catholic churches (Champion, 1993). A notable example of the power of the Catholic monarchies over the papacy was the suppression of the Society of Jesus in the second half of the eighteenth century, which received explicit papal approval (Wright, 2008).

Finally, the nineteenth century saw the culmination of this historical process and the transformation of the Catholic Church into an explicit opponent of many modern developments in Europe. During the culture wars of that century, the rift between the Church and the liberal and republican segments of European societies grew deeper and deeper with the Church losing its influence everywhere, even in former strongholds such as Spain where the clergy took up the cause of monarchy in the Carlist Wars (Clark and Kaiser, 2003). Particularly prominent were the *Kulturkampf* between the Catholic Church and the imperial power in Germany in the 1870s and the hostility of the pope towards the unification of Italy. The growing tension also found specific expression in the teaching of the Church, from the definition of papal infallibility in the dogmatic constitution *Pastor aeternus* in 1870 (Pastor Aeternus, 1870) to the Oath Against Modernism instituted by Pope Pius X (1903–14) in 1910 (Sacrorum Antistitum, 1910).

However, in the following decades, after the low point at the end of the eighteenth century, the Church underwent a remarkable transformation in several key areas. Church bureaucracy was centralized and the power of the popes increased, not in the least thanks to the concordats that the Church started to sign much more frequently in the nineteenth century, thus undercutting the role of the national churches. Popular piety across Europe also underwent a significant revitalization and the 1850s to the 1880s saw a revival of mass pilgrimage (Blackbourn, 1991). This popular Catholicism exhibited a particular tenacity in regions where it faced oppression (for example present-day Poland, Ireland, and parts of Germany).

## Eurocentrism and universalism in the Church's discourse

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Since the early modern period, and the colonization of the Americas, the two essential features of Catholic geopolitics—its Eurocentrism and its universalism—have increasingly clashed. The universal Christian monarchy of medieval times was always, if implicitly, conceived as a European empire. During the colonial period, when horizons suddenly expanded, the Church tried to solve this tension by accepting the overseas territories as an extension of European influence. Hence, in the Catholic discourse of the time the European conquest, as brutal as it was, was directly linked to the universal mission of the Church, turning the Church into one of the most fundamental colonial institutions (Schwaller, 2011; for an overview, see also Arciniegas, 1967). Indeed, spreading 'European civilization' was almost synonymous with the expansion of (not only Catholic) Christianity—to be European equalled Christian, which equalled civilized. To be fair, dissident Catholic voices always existed—Catholic thinkers such as Bartolomé de las Casas (1484–1566) (de las Casas, 1877) were critical of the Eurocentric worldview and even more of the cruel practices that accompanied the spread of Christianity to other parts of the world during the European colonial conquest. But the Catholic mainstream firmly rested on the assumption that colonization, Europeanization (and later Westernization) were conducive to the growth of global Catholic influence.

Nonetheless, the universal mission of the Church and the territorial specificity of Europe could not be entirely reconciled. As a consequence, the Church tried to shake off the Eurocentric worldview, in particular in the second half of the twentieth century. The process, however, has been uneven and has not permeated all segments of the Church to the same extent: on the level of official Catholic discourse, the emancipation from Europe continues unabated, but elsewhere the Eurocentrism of the Church is much more deeply rooted.

Two important examples of such entrenched Eurocentrism can be mentioned here. The first is the composition of the Church's hierarchy. For instance, in spite of the recent changes, which aim at a greater correspondence between the number of the Catholic faithful in various parts of the world and the numbers of cardinals from those regions, the Eurocentric nature of the Church is still clearly visible. Out of 224 cardinals, 106 are Europeans and Europe thus has more cardinals than the four regions of Africa, Asia, North America, and South America combined (Composition of Cardinals, 2020). This ratio corresponds better to the situation a hundred years ago when two-thirds of the world's Catholics lived in Europe, rather than to the current situation when the share of European Catholics in the overall number of Catholic believers has dropped to less than a quarter (Pew Research Center, 2018a).

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The second dimension is related to the secularization thesis and the narrative of decline, which is strongly present in the Catholic Church. Virtually all secularization theories have their roots in the decline of both religiosity and the public visibility of religion in Europe (Swatos and Christiano, 1999). The simple, linear narrative of global secularization has, however, been discredited, and even many one-time proponents of the theory have changed their minds. It is important to note, in this connection, that the element that has been most fiercely attacked is the idea that trends in European religiosity can be applied universally and that the pattern which sociologists of religion discovered in Europe will necessarily be repeated in other parts of

the world (Lambert, 1999; Berger, Davie, and Fokas, 2008). The continued decline of organized religious activities in Europe and the self-identification of Europeans with a particular religious tradition, on the other hand, is not disputed (Bullivant, 2018).

The same trend applies to European Catholics: although the numbers of Catholics are increasing on the global scale, we can safely claim that the attendance of the Catholic churches as well as the numbers of Catholics in Europe have not seen any increase in recent decades (Berger, Davie, and Fokas, 2008). But here is the Eurocentric fallacy of the Catholic Church: the ongoing secularization in Europe has been disproportionately influential in church discourse, again probably due to the large numbers of Europeans (and Westerners more broadly) in the hierarchy. As a result, Western-style secularization is often seen as the greatest threat the Church has to face, even though this discourse is largely peripheral in non-European parts of the Catholic Church.

## Catholicism and unification in Europe

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In the twentieth century, the leading idea propounded by the Catholic Church with regard to the Old Continent was undoubtedly that of European unification, with the support for the federalist vision of Europe being particularly popular in the higher echelons of the hierarchy. True, the idea of the European unification was not entirely new in ecclesial discourse but it achieved an unprecedented level of dominance in the twentieth century because it brought together several older lines of thought and, in a sense, reconciled the opposing views in the Church on issues such as the nation-state, peace, and universal mission.

It would be unwise to reduce Catholic support for European unification to the anti-war movement within Catholicism. That said, the Church did belong to the most adamant critics of the First World War, sharing with many intellectuals of the time the 'idealist' view that the 'Great War' was a consequence of both the failure of the European state and the pre-war international order, and that war as such is never profitable (Angell, 1911). The old system of the balance of power, which was based on the ever-changing alliances of the European great powers, was identified as the root cause of the conflict. Idealists argued that what was needed instead was a strong international (and later on, supranational) structures which would unite European countries around the cause of peace.

p. 444 Second, the project of European unity was attractive for the Church as the idea of a universal organization echoed the medieval dream of the unification of all of Europe under one institutional roof. The old notion of a universal monarchy ceased to be viable in the course of the high and late Middle Ages, and was replaced by a renewed stress on *ius gentium* (de Vitoria, 1917). But as a thought experiment, it has been remarkably alive in the Catholic tradition, and for this reason the idea of a unified global (or at least regional) political structure has never entirely lost its appeal. For the same reason, the Catholic stress on the need to overcome state-centric views and to transnationalize politics in Europe preceded the first attempts at European integration in the twentieth century (Kaiser, 2007). It is, thus, inevitable that the understanding of the EU as a democratic embodiment of the Christian monarchy clashes with the more secularist interpretations of the EU (as revealed, for example, in the 'Christian roots' controversy during the European Convention of 2001–3).

Third, the support for transnational structure is reinforced by the self-understanding of the Church as a universal organization. The intrinsic propensity to support other transnational or universal organizations is well developed within the Catholic Church and it does not apply only towards the EU. It is no accident that the popes have repeatedly expressed a similar view when addressing the United Nations in the second half of the twentieth century (Paul VI, 1965).



Fourth, in the course of the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the Church came increasingly to distrust the European state (see the evolution described in Philpott, 2004). No matter if this involved the absolute monarchies of Europe or the later increasingly liberal political elites, they all aimed to circumscribe the power of the Catholic Church, to bring the national churches under their control and, in the later phases, to suppress the Catholic influence in education as well as in politics. In spite of the occasional glimmer of cooperation, the experience with Bismarckian Germany and the unification of Italy ensured that a wary attitude towards the modern state became a firmly embedded feature of European Catholicism. Hence, the support for the emerging federalist movement was also in a sense seen (by both sides) as a common cause against the all-powerful European state.

Finally, the process of European unification was perceived not only as a way to prevent another round of bloody conflict in Europe, but also as an instrument for stopping the expansion of communism that was increasingly identified as the most ominous danger for European Catholicism. The outbreak of the Second World War strengthened the conviction that nation states, without a functioning overarching structure, cannot coexist peacefully. But the victory of Soviet Russia and the creation of a belt of its satellite states in Central Europe, many of which were predominantly Catholic, translated into an even more strongly perceived need to create a stable counterbalance to Soviet communism.

A caveat is needed here. While this section is focused on the relationship between the Catholic Church and the EU, any conflation of Europe and the EU must be avoided. Although this conflation is widespread in the political discourse of the EU, the EU-centric reduction of Europe may distort the picture of Catholic attitudes to Europe as ↵ those outside the EU often perceive Europe in rather different terms. The temptation is even stronger in the Catholic Church as most European countries outside the EU are predominantly non-Catholic. Especially after the 2004 and 2007 rounds of Eastern enlargement, the danger of treating the rest of Europe (in particular the post-Soviet countries like Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus) as external to Europe returns with renewed force. In this context, it should be noted that unlike Pope John Paul II, the two most recent popes tend to reduce Europe to the EU, be it to critique the spiritual crisis of the West (Pope Benedict XVI) or its consumerist nature (Pope Francis).

## Papal thought on Europe in the twentieth century

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All the recent popes have been strong advocates of European unification, but Popes Benedict XV (1914–22) and Pius XII (1939–58) were especially adamant in their support of a federal union (see the studies on the papal support for European integration such as Chelini-Pont, 2009; Kratochvíl and Doležal, 2015). For instance, during his long pontificate, Pius XII continually supported the causes of both European and world federalism. Among other measures, he sent a personal representative to the vitally important Congress of Europe in The Hague in May 1948 and in his papal addresses, the pope repeatedly expressed his unequivocal support for a united Europe, alluding directly to a ‘European Union’ (Pius XII, 1948: 2). It is not surprising therefore that when the European Communities were founded in the 1950s, the Catholic influence was clearly palpable, not least due to the decisive role played by a number of Christian politicians (such as Konrad Adenauer, Alcide de Gasperi, and Robert Schuman). The political opponents of the integration process, conversely, accused them of building ‘Vatican Europe’ (Foret and Riva, 2010).

Even after the European Communities were established, unification remained a visionary project, rather more strongly perhaps than in the past. Interestingly, two contradictory tendencies defined the Catholic view, and in particular those of the popes of the 1960s to the 1980s. On the one hand, as the Cold War progressed, the popes started to stress the global aspects of maintaining peace; thus, the old idea of world federalism gained a new expression in the better functioning of the global institutions that would prevent the nuclear extermination of the human race. This had practical consequences for the ties between various

international institutions and the Church, which intensified its cooperation with the United Nations and its agencies (FAO, ILO, WHO, and so on). It is no accident that the first address of a pope at the United Nations was given by Pope Paul VI (1963–78) on 4 October 1965 (Paul VI, 1965).

p. 446 On the other hand, the idea of European unification did not disappear but was largely transformed. The popes still gave ‘full assent to this movement inclined toward the achievement of European unity’, as Pope Paul VI declared when he proclaimed St. ↳ Benedict Principal Saint of All of Europe in 1964 (Paul VI, 2017a: 23). But the old ambivalence towards Europe started to re-emerge: casting Europe not as the current integration structures, but rather as an ideal that Europeans have to achieve in the future, allowed the Church to keep its distance from the European Communities, and occasionally to criticize its accelerating secularization. In the message to Christian democratic members of the European Parliament, Pope Paul VI made this very clear when he argued that ‘this Europe of tomorrow, which is already taking shape, must be based on the human, moral and religious heritage inspired to a large extent by the Gospel, which has affirmed and continues to affirm this Continent’s unique importance in the history of civilization’ (Paul VI, 2017b: 21).

The election of John Paul II (1978–2005) marked a renewed interest in the broader geopolitical order in Europe and the natural focus of a Polish pope on the East–West divisions. Once again Europe became a visionary project of a reunified free continent, which would breathe with both its lungs (John Paul II, 1995). The vision of John Paul II was, however, broader—not the EU, but the all-encompassing unity of the entire continent. While this unity can be understood in terms of the expansion of the EU, the papal documents produced during the pontificate of John Paul II tended to speak less about the integration project and its institutional form; it is, rather, the spiritual and not political unity with which they are primarily concerned. In this context, John Paul II was the first pope to consistently focus on the two parts of Europe in religious terms: Western Europe with the Latin tradition and Eastern European with its roots in Greek/Byzantine Christianity. Thus, for him, Europe was still defined as a cultural and religious whole with Christianity as its essential feature, but Eastern Christianity was elevated to a substantially higher status in this new more ecumenically minded narrative. Thus, when proclaiming Saints Cyril and Methodius co-patrons of Europe, in the Apostolic Letter *Egregiae Virtutis* of 31 December 1980, John Paul II talked about two independent, but complementary Christian traditions, but also about two different cultures, which were erected on these traditions (John Paul II, 1980).

p. 447 With Pope Benedict XVI (2005–13), the EU returned to the limelight as the stress on the spiritual unity of John Paul II shifted back to the spiritual heritage as such. For Benedict, the political division of the Continent was largely overcome (Benedict XVI, 2007) but the Continent was not only highly secularized, but becoming more so. As a result, Benedict XVI repeatedly underlined the Christian dimension of the integration process, arguing the European unification should not be anti-Christian. However, with Benedict XVI and even more so with Francis I (elected pope in March 2013), a scepticism towards the future of Europe has become a regular reference point: ‘One could almost think that the European continent is in fact losing faith in its own future’ (Benedict XVI, 2007). The reasons for this scepticism given in the papal pronouncements vary but the typical answer is the combination of individualist consumerism with the ignorance of Europe’s spiritual values: ‘Does not this unique form of “apostasy” from itself, even more than its apostasy from God, lead Europe to doubt its own identity?’ (Benedict XVI, 2007). In a sense, Benedict extended the critique, which was previously levelled at the modern state, to the EU. While various religious actors become increasingly present in ↳ the public sphere, in particular in relation to the emergence and growth of religious diversity in Europe, the tensions between secular authorities and religious communities have been growing, due to the expansion of the areas in which the state and the EU are active. Hence, the EU and its Member States are criticized for their ‘aggressive secularism’ and their alleged attempts to push the Catholic Church out of the public sphere.



The approach of Pope Francis is entirely different in so far as he is more focused on the structural problems of global capitalism, in which Europe undoubtedly takes part, but of which Europe is but a small element. Instead of criticizing EU institutions, Pope Francis sees them as impotent vis-à-vis the pressures of global capitalism. As Francis put it in his controversial address to the European Parliament in November 2014, Europe is 'a grandmother', giving the impression of being 'weary, no longer fertile and vital' and only a renewal, in which 'the Church can and must play her part' (Francis I, 2014, 2016) can save the continent. Hence, for Pope Francis, Europe is certainly not the centrepiece of global politics, and the EU is a very particular regional arrangement, which is seen in a less than favourable light. In this narrative, the EU is not only insufficiently sensitive to the plight of the poor in the Global South, but may even be historically responsible for the structural conditions which produce global inequalities.

Throughout the second half of the twentieth century and in spite of all the above-mentioned changes, one concept is essential for understanding the Church's attitude to Europe: that of the dignity of the human person (Kratochvíl and Doležal, 2015). The focus on human dignity made it possible to challenge the nation-state and call for federal unity in Europe. During the Cold War, it allowed the Catholic Church to criticize the functioning of political institutions in European countries without having to resort to naming those countries and their ideologies, thus protecting the Church from being accused of taking sides too openly. Later popes also used the concept in their criticism of consumerist culture, while avoiding a direct attack on capitalism or even private ownership; the Church could, therefore, distinguish the modes of production and distribution that are beneficial from those that hamper human dignity. Similarly, in the Church's discourse, human dignity has replaced human rights as the starting point, which makes the conservative argument possible: that is, that human rights are indeed universal, but only those that advance human dignity. Finally, a key advantage of grounding the discourse in human dignity is that the Church may enter the European public sphere on its own terms and with its own vocabulary.

## Popular Catholic geopolitics and Europe

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The attitudes to Europe expressed by the popes and the Curia belong among the most articulate and the most sophisticated. However, we should also consider Europe's Catholic populations. Christianity (and in particular its Catholic variety) is often considered relevant when public attitudes to the European state as well as the EU are analysed (Nelsen, Guth, and Fraser, 2001; Boomgaarden and Freire, 2009; Nelsen, Guth, and Highsmith, 2011). But just as the body of European Catholic believers and the EU are undergoing substantial changes, so also have popular Catholic views evolved. The decreasing participation of Catholics in the life of the Church, including religious rituals, and their tendency to belong without believing (Hervieu-Léger, 2006) as well as to believe without belonging (Davie, 1990) have erased, to some extent, the differences between Catholics and their fellow citizens. As a result, the historical differences in the attitudes of Catholics towards European integration are disappearing. In the past, the more secularized societies as well as the predominantly Protestant countries have been more sceptical about European integration than their Catholic equivalents (Nelsen, Guth, and Fraser, 2001). This difference between the integration-supportive Catholic nations of Southern Europe and the more Eurosceptic Northern Europe has, however, slowly diminished (Leustean and Madeley, 2009; Nelsen, Guth, and Highsmith, 2011).

The continuing transformation of the EU also makes the relationship with its Catholic citizens more complex. First, the EU, after several rounds of enlargement, is religiously much more diverse: approximately half of the current EU Member States are predominantly non-Catholic. Second, new controversial issues arise, such as LGBT+ rights. Interestingly, the majorities of non-practising Christians in Europe often have starkly different views from the practising Christians towards these issues, which makes the analysis even more complex (Pew Research Center, 2018b).

Simultaneously, many old issues re-emerge as points of religious–secular contention in Europe. The most well known was the controversy involving the (ultimately abandoned) Constitutional Treaty of the EU and the Constitutional Convention which revolved around the reference to God or Christianity in the Treaty's Preamble. Although this may seem as simply a political matter, the real issue at stake was a profound philosophical question. Should the modern state (or the EU, in this case) build its liberal democratic order on assumptions which transcend that order, but which that order vitally needs for its own functioning?

A range of positions towards this issue were articulated during the debates. At one extreme, there were claims that Europe grew primarily from Christian roots and that the fundamentals of all European political institutions, as well as the most essential European values, are Christian (or Judaeo-Christian). At the other is the purely secular argument that Europe's identity is exactly the opposite: that it is primarily related to Europe's successful separation of church and state, its individualism and liberalism, and its ability to free itself from religious influence (see the analysis in Pollock, 2012). Again, the concept of human rights is at the heart of this debate, with one side arguing that such rights were developed from the Christian stress on the dignity of the human being as *Imago Dei*, and the other pointing to the historically negative attitude of the (Catholic) Church to the adoption of human rights and its sharp critique of many of them.

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## **The Catholic Church and the European Union**

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### **The Catholic policy towards the European Communities/European Union**

The relationship between the Catholic Church and the EU cannot be conceived in the same way as the relationship between two secular institutions or even more misleadingly, as that between two states as such an approach would grossly misrepresent the role that the Catholic Church plays within European integration. First, the Church and the EU are not mutually exclusive; large numbers of EU citizens are Catholic Christians and many Catholic Christians are the citizens of EU Member States. The first President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, was adamant in his role as an EU policy maker while simultaneously being a devout Catholic. While this alone should cast doubts on an oversimplified account of the EU–Church relations, exactly the same fact, paradoxically, sometimes strengthens the popular image of church representatives as secret agents of a foreign power—an image that has a long history in many European countries, ranging from the United Kingdom to Germany. Similarly one-sided and incomplete is the view of the Catholic Church as a lobbyist group. This view, however, is relatively widespread as churches and religious communities are often treated as lobbyist organizations by EU law.

A further complication is the triad of the Vatican City State, the Holy See, and the Catholic Church. The popes speak, on various occasions, as the supreme representatives of all three. In terms of international law, however, it is the Holy See that cultivates and develops its ties with other international legal entities such as the EU. As a result, it is the pope who is officially responsible for 'representing Vatican City State and managing its relations with foreign States', including the EU (Vatican City State, n.d.). In practical terms, however, the relations are directed by the Secretariat of State, which is part of the Roman Curia. Within the Secretariat of State, it is the Section for Relations with States that cultivates the ties with the EU, in spite of the EU's nature as a non-state actor.

In spite of the enthusiastic support of the popes for European unification, the concrete political ties developed very slowly and with a substantial amount of hesitation from both sides. Surprisingly, the Catholic ties with the Communities lagged behind Protestant churches whose Ecumenical Commission on European Cooperation was established in the early 1950s. But the first (albeit very modest) Catholic organizations of a similar type started to emerge shortly afterwards (see Table 25.1). Today, the most important of these bodies is the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (COMECE).

It was founded in 1980 with the aim of strengthening the cooperation between the Catholic Church and the European Communities, being tasked in particular with following the developments in the integration process. ↴ The development of the diplomatic ties between the Holy See and the European Communities was similarly protracted as they were formally established as late as 1970, with the appointment of the Apostolic Nuncio for Belgium, Luxembourg, and the European Communities. It was only in 1996 that the Holy See separated the papal nunciature to Belgium from its representation to the European Communities (see the analysis in Turner, 2012).

Currently, the Catholic Church defines a number of ‘foreign policy’ priorities vis-à-vis the EU, which sometimes differ significantly from its general political aims. Globally, the Church sets the trinity of peace, freedom, and fundamental human rights as its primary political goals (Lajolo, 2007), which have become even more important in the connection with the so-called third wave of democratization (Philpot, 2004). All the other goals are considered secondary, including those of ‘commercial relations, economic and financial questions, military forces, border disputes’ (Lajolo, 2007), unless they have a direct connection to the three most fundamental ones. However, in Europe the Church tends to focus on a number of other issues, which sometimes overshadow the three above-mentioned priorities. These policy areas include inter-religious dialogue, environmental policies, the fight against poverty and hunger, the Christian roots of Europe, and various topics related to global politics such as the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (The Holy See, 2016).

**Table 25.1** Chronology of the Catholic presence in the process of European integration

Year	Event
1956	The Jesuit European Office established to monitor the work of the Council of Europe
1963	The Catholic European Study Information Centre/Office Catholique d’Information sur les Problèmes Européens (OCIPE) opened in Brussels
1963	Foyer Catholique Européen established in Brussels as a network for the lay Catholics working in the institutions of the Communities
1976	The creation of The Catholic Pastoral European Information Service (SIPECA) mandated to keep the Bishops’ Conferences informed about the progress of European integration
1980	The creation of COMECE to monitor the evolution of the European Communities and to provide assistance to the Church in European policy-making
1997	The start of the meetings of COMECE with every new President of the European Council
2007	The establishment of the regular dialogue between the EU and the churches (Art. 17 of the Treaty of Lisbon)
2011	The registration of COMECE and The Jesuit European Social Centre in the Transparency Register

Source: Kratochvíl and Doležal, 2015: 70. Reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.

## The policy of the EC/EU towards the Catholic Church

The vital importance of the Catholic Church for European integration should be self-evident. Suffice to say that a number of key leaders of the EC/EU have been Catholics, ranging from the founding fathers to the recent Presidents of the European Council (such as Donald Tusk and his predecessor Herman Van Rompuy) as well as a number of recent Presidents of the European Commission (for instance, Romano Prodi, José Manuel Barroso, and Jean-Claude Juncker). It is therefore paradoxical that the EU's attitude towards the Catholic Church has always been somewhat ambivalent. The increased stress on the need for a dialogue with religious communities is a relatively recent phenomenon in the EU, and one that is heavily contested by the secularists who argue that this move can blur the border between supposedly private religious beliefs and the secular public sphere, and give the Church an undue position in the political decision-making processes.

Two developments strengthen the position of the secularists. First, the dialogue with religious communities has not been inspired by the belief that such communities are natural allies in the process of European integration, but rather by the conviction that these communities may harm the EU and that the EU has to win them over to boost its legitimacy. Second, the process of de-secularization is much less palpable in Europe than on other continents and while the need for dialogue is certainly felt, the urgency perceived elsewhere is absent. The result is a policy of the lowest common denominator: controversial issues are not tackled and are instead left to the national political arenas of the individual EU Member States.

And for the same reason, the references to religion were rather limited in older EC/EU documents. In particular as far as legislation is concerned, allusions to religion were rare until relatively recently. In the EU treaties, for example, the first clear reference to religion was not made until the late 1990s, in the Treaty of Amsterdam (see Table 25.2) (see also the more detailed analysis in Carrera and Parkin, 2010; Robbers, 2013). And only in 2007, did Article 17 of the Treaty of Lisbon introduce an open, transparent, and regular dialogue with churches and religious and philosophical organizations.

The establishment of the diplomatic mission of the European Communities at the Holy See was also the result of an arduous process. It took ten years from the appointment of the first papal nuncio to the European Communities for the first ambassador of the Delegation of the European Commission to be accredited to the Holy See. But it was only after the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force on 1 December 2009 that the Delegation of the European Commission to the Holy See was formally transformed into the Delegation of the European Union (see Table 25.3). The explanation for this delay is the complicated inter-institutional relations in the EU and the gradual development of the EU's diplomacy bearing in mind that the EU's External Action Service is still a novel institution. Having said that, the fact that the full diplomatic relations between the Holy See and the EU took more than fifty years to establish demonstrates conclusively that the relations with the Holy See have never been a key priority for the EC/EU. ↴

Table 25.2 References to religion in EU treaties

EU Treaty	Signed	Links to religion, faith, and churches
Treaties of Rome	1957	not mentioned
Merger Treaty – Brussels Treaty	1965	not mentioned
Treaty of Maastricht on the European Union	1992	not mentioned
Treaty of Amsterdam	1997	<p>... combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, <b>religion or belief</b>, disability, age or sexual orientation</p> <p>... the Community and the Member States shall pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals, while respecting the legislative or administrative provisions and customs of the Member States relating in particular to <b>religious rites</b>, cultural traditions and regional heritage</p> <p>Declaration on <b>the status of churches</b> and non-confessional organisations: The European Union respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of <b>churches and religious associations or communities</b> in the Member States. The European Union equally respects the status of philosophical and non-confessional organisations</p>
Treaty of Nice	2001	not mentioned
(the non-ratified Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe)		<p>Preamble: Drawing inspiration from the cultural, <b>religious and humanist inheritance of Europe</b>, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law...</p>
	(2004)	<p>In defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall aim to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, <b>religion or belief</b>, disability, age or sexual orientation</p>

2007	The Union respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of <b>churches and religious associations or communities</b> in the Member States
Treaty of Lisbon	The Union equally respects the status under national law of philosophical and non-confessional organisations
	Recognising their identity and their specific contribution, the Union shall maintain <b>an open, transparent and regular dialogue with these churches and organisations</b>

Source: Kratochvíl and Doležal, 2015: 54. Reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.

p. 453 **Table 25.3** Chronology of diplomatic relations: the European Communities—The Holy See

Year	Event
1970	Appointment of the Apostolic Nuncio to the European Communities by the Holy See
1980	Foundation of the COMECE which officially represents the Bishops' Conferences of the EU Member States at the EU institutions
1996	Separation of the papal nunciature to the European Communities from the papal nunciature to Belgium
2006	The official visit of President José Manuel Barroso to the Holy See in May 2006, which paved the way to the accreditation of the first ambassador of the EU
2006	Accreditation of Ambassador to the Holy See
2006	The first official visit to the Vatican after the full reciprocity of diplomatic relations
2007	Appointment of a representative of the European Commission to the Order of Malta
2009	The transformation of the Delegation of the European Commission to the Delegation of the European Union (the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon)

Source: Kratochvíl and Doležal, 2015: 44. Reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.

## Conclusion

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Europe and the Catholic Church were born in a mutually constitutive relationship. The gradual emancipation of the Catholic Church from the Eastern Roman influence and its cultural and spiritual agency in the Latin West led to both the emergence of a self-confident papacy and a nascent European identity. This in turn allowed the Church to play a decisive role in European Middle Ages, contributing both to the preservation and development of ancient knowledge and to the cultural developments from which modern Europe was later created.

The Catholic Church has however always maintained a dialectical relationship with Europe as the Church perceived itself as the representative of European civilization while simultaneously proclaiming its own universality. This tension has, ultimately, brought an end to the identification of the Church with Europe. The (often brutal and violent) spread of Catholic Christianity beyond the borders of Europe, and the gradual but inexorable secularization of the continent mean that while the Church still acknowledges its European roots, the trend towards a predominantly non-European Church is unmistakable.

But it is not only the Church which has tried to shed its Eurocentric image, but Europe itself which has become progressively less Catholic and at times anti-Catholic. The power struggle between the secular rulers and the Church has included several victories for the Church, but for the most part, the disassociation of the European states from the Catholic Church has been steadily, albeit unevenly, progressing since the Reformation. ↵ And in the end, what European rulers failed to achieve politically, the process of secularization has achieved at a much more profound level. It is a paradox that Europe as the birthplace of Catholicism has become once again what Church leaders call missionary territory.

How far the Catholic Church will reclaim its European heritage remains to be seen. The Church is in an unenviable position in many ways, in particular due to its abuse of power and its resistance to liberalism, not to mention its initially negative attitude to what are now considered fundamental rights. Paradoxically, however, some of these disadvantages may render the Church attractive for Europeans: the Catholic critique of European consumerism, neo-liberal individualism, and the ongoing degradation of the environment renders it one of the few globally influential voices that call for a radical reorientation of human society. More doubtful, however, is how far the Church is capable of managing its own internal transformation in order that its spiritual, intellectual, and cultural potential can once again be tapped by Europeans.

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CHAPTER

## 26 Protestantism and Europe

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### Abstract

The Reformation still shapes European society—and its most important post-war creation, the European Union. This chapter explores how Protestantism fractured Western Christendom, sacralized national identity, and invented the nation-state as an alternative Christian society. In the process, Protestants fostered a profound antipathy to the Catholic ‘other’ and a powerful affinity for national borders making it difficult to imagine joining a federal Europe. They were reluctant to enter the EU and awkward on arrival. Protestants never caught the vision of a united Europe, nor did the continentals grasp how Protestant national identities would resist any sacrifice of sovereignty. This clash of irreconcilable visions—one Catholic, one Protestant—became an obstacle to post-war efforts to unite Europe and has led to enduring differences in the behaviour of states, elites, churches, political parties, interest groups, and public opinion towards integration and European identity.

**Keywords:** [Europe](#), [European Union](#), [integration](#), [Protestant](#), [Catholic](#), [national identity](#), [European identity](#), [federalism](#), [public opinion](#), [Reformation](#)

**Subject:** [History of Religion](#), [Religion](#)

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THE Reformation still shapes European society—and its most important postwar creation, the European Union (EU). This chapter explores how Protestantism fractured Western Christendom, sacralized national identity, and invented the nation-state as an alternative Christian society. In the process, Protestants fostered a profound antipathy to the Catholic ‘other’ and a powerful affinity for national borders—defended by a divinely appointed monarch—making it difficult to imagine joining a federal Europe, even after the trauma of two world wars. Protestants could not easily give up the nation-state for a risky hope. They were reluctant to enter the EU, awkward on arrival, and now, with Brexit, are even risking hardship to leave. Protestants never caught the vision of a united Europe inspiring Robert Schuman’s and Jean Monnet’s project, nor did the continentals grasp how Protestant national identities would resist any sacrifice of sovereignty. This clash of irreconcilable visions—one Catholic, one Protestant—became an obstacle to post-war efforts to unite Europe.

This chapter focuses on Protestants' relationships to the formal and informal institutions comprising the EU. Protestants have contributed to contemporary Europe in many ways: through international peace and justice efforts, poverty relief at home and abroad, environmental awareness, political party activity, and advocacy on behalf of women, migrants, and ethnic and sexual minorities. But their greatest impact may well have been on the politics of European integration. That is the story here.

One additional note: the term 'religion' is used here in an active sense, with full awareness that most European societies have secularized, and some of them dramatically. What 'religion' often means in this chapter, however, is 'confessional culture' (Nelsen and Guth, 2015). Religion shapes culture, and that influence continues long after beliefs fade and observance ceases (Norris and Inglehart, 2004). Religion has inertia; confessional cultures still matter, even as their impact ebbs.

## Protestantism, Christendom, and the rise of the nation-state

Agitation for theological and ecclesiastical reform of the Roman Catholic Church began long before 1517 when Martin Luther reputedly nailed complaints to the door of All Saints' Church in Wittenberg. But his 95 Theses ignited the dry tinder on the forest floor of Western Christendom, erupting into a conflagration that swept back and forth across Europe for 150 years. The unintended result was a divided church and shattered Christendom (MacCulloch, 2003; Gregory, 2012). The political effects are still with us today.

The sixteenth-century reformers were a contentious lot, but they concurred on several issues. Most fundamentally, they believed the Roman Church was wrong in teaching that salvation came to those baptized into the *visible* One True Church. They affirmed the universality of the church, but downplayed its role in salvation, especially if that entity was the corrupt Roman Church. Instead, they followed St Augustine's insistence that God chose his *elect* to receive eternal salvation out of pure grace—made possible by the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ. The *elect* were known only to God, and constituted the true community of saints, *invisible* to the world. No visible church would ever be pure, always containing both the elect and hypocrites.

Second, the reformers saw the source of evil in the world as the pope and his Vatican henchmen, often describing the Roman Church in apocalyptic terms. Luther, for instance, called the pope the 'true Antichrist . . . of all men the most sinful' and declared that 'papal power serves only to lead souls into damnation. ...' (Luther, 1966 [1520]: 193–4). 'Antichrist' also hinted at more sinister machinations, evoking Scriptural accounts of a great malevolent figure joining in the final Apocalyptic struggle between God and the forces of evil. The reformers thought their monumental conflict with Rome could signify that God's judgment was near. Some Protestants in later generations, especially in Britain, the Netherlands, and Scandinavia, emphasized this theme. They determined that the End Times had begun, that Christ's return and the Day of Judgment were near, and that the pope/Antichrist was bent on destruction of the saints. Events did not confirm their expectations, but anti-papism and anti-Catholicism burrowed ever more deeply into the DNA of Protestant confessional culture.

Finally, the reformers reaffirmed the ideal of 'Christendom', with 'a single church uniting all citizens, working in alliance with civil authority' (Nelsen and Guth, 2015: 69). Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin recognized the symbiosis between church and state. God appointed civil magistrates to keep order, nurture righteousness, and establish 'right worship'. Thus, the visible church, into which all subjects were baptized, would honour the righteous prince; in turn, that ruler would support, defend, and lead the purified church. The critical difference with medieval Christendom was that the reformed church was not a visible *universal* church, but the visible local (or national) church. ↪ Moreover, the rightful ruler was not a *universal* prince, but a magistrate exercising sovereignty within a city- or a nation-state. Thus, the reformers accepted the medieval marriage of throne and altar, just as long as neither altar nor prince were Catholic.

Magisterial Protestantism abandoned Rome, but preserved Christendom with a new model of religious governance: Christendom in each country. As Diana Muir Appelbaum (2013) shows, the reformers' insistence on reading the whole Bible, both privately and in public worship, combined with the availability of vernacular translations, created a new understanding of God's relationship to his people. Protestants began to see their own world in that of the Hebrew Bible: they encountered 'nations' as groups united by kinship, language, and territory; they saw God placing particular peoples in particular places; and they learned that God had intervened in history, choosing a special people for a sacred mission. The Bible described a world 'composed of rightfully sovereign and equal nations' possessing the right to self-determination, equality of its members before the law, and rule by leaders subject to that law (Appelbaum, 2013: 322–3). For Protestants, a world of nations was preferable to medieval political unity.

In this context Protestant national identities emerged. Almost immediately Protestants began reading their own stories into that of ancient Israel. They, too, could be rescued by God from foreign slavery—under the pope in Rome or Philip II of Spain (r. 1556–98)—and from the murderous hand of Pharaoh—an idolatrous Queen Mary I (r. 1553–8) or wicked Duke of Alba. They, too, could covenant with God and each other to establish a righteous kingdom led by a sacred monarch such as David or Solomon. Protestants in England, Scotland, Scandinavia, and the Netherlands saw themselves as God's people, chosen to be a light to the world by living the Kingdom of God on earth. This mission bound strangers to one another and to their prince, producing a common identity and sense of cosmic privilege. While Protestants from Sweden to Holland could each consider themselves chosen, they believed that God could choose other Protestant nations as well (Appelbaum, 2013). The God of the Bible was the God of all the nations.

Ambitious rulers found much to like in the fragmentation of Christendom: a church freed from Rome allowed princes to employ religion to unify emerging nation-states. The precise relationship between state and church depended both on the type of Protestantism in a given territory and the nation-building strategy of the prince. Anglican England and the Lutheran Germanic and Nordic territories took a top-down approach—with the state on top. England's Henry VIII (r. 1509–47), Sweden's Gustav I Vasa (r. 1523–60), and Denmark-Norway's Christian III (r. 1534/1537–59) officially established state churches independent of Rome and installed themselves as the heads with bishops answerable to the Crown. The episcopal polity adopted by Anglican and Lutheran churches, emphasizing ecclesiastical hierarchies, facilitated domination by secular authorities. Monarchs ensured that all subjects were baptized into the church, making membership a mark of participation in the nation. The national church unified and disciplined the people, subject to the divine authority of its princely head. The monarch, in return, pledged to defend the church against all enemies, particularly the external and internal forces of the Counter-Reformation.

p. 461 The second model of church–state relations emerged from Reformed Protestantism and represented a bottom-up approach. Most Reformed congregations arose in ↪ hostile political contexts, often organized around small groups of covenanting members. Ecclesiastical authority rested with congregations and councils, not bishops. This 'consistorial model' helped preserve the church under persecution, but usually failed to provide the unifying force of the episcopal model (Geneva, Zürich, and the Palatinate were exceptions). Reformed churches in Holland and Presbyterian churches in Scotland were too fissiparous and their societies, especially Holland's, were too diverse to permit a religious monopoly. But several did become official churches, defended by a secular Crown drawing legitimacy from their embrace.

Protestantism thus assisted nation-building by forging a 'we-feeling' among a people loosely grouped by language and territory, now fired by a new sense of chosenness and a deep hatred for Rome. The nation-state, as it emerged after the Treaties of Westphalia (1648), served Protestants as a guarantor of national liberty. Protestants did not immediately abandon the idea of the righteous society governed by throne and altar, but gave up the notion of a *single, unified* Christian polity in favour of a more liberating idea: national Christendom.



## Protestantism and the idea of Europe

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Protestants found freedom in the religious and political fragmentation of Europe. Networks of Protestant leaders spread across Europe after the Reformation, but there was no attempt to unify churches separated from Rome in any pan-European organization. There would be no Protestant ecumenical councils or popes. Nor were newly forged Protestant states open to European political union. Thus, few Protestants took much interest in the ‘idea of Europe’—that Europe as a cultural unity should be governed as a single polity. Exploring such ideas was best left to Catholics.

There were a few exceptions. The Calvinist Maximilien de Béthune, Duke of Sully (1559–1641), who worked for the Catholic convert Henry IV of France (r. 1589–1610) (who ‘won Paris for a Mass’), proposed a ‘Grand Design’, dividing Europe into fifteen states of equal power and establishing a dispute settlement mechanism presided over by the Holy Roman emperor and the pope. Later in the century William Penn (1644–1718), the Quaker founder of Pennsylvania, offered a plan for an ‘Imperial Parliament’ to settle international disputes, complete with weighted voting and a rotating presidency. Both schemes curtailed the right of states to make war, but defended the sovereignty of each over internal affairs. Contrast these plans with those of the French Charles-Irénée Castel, Abbé de Saint-Pierre (1658–1743), who in the early eighteenth century called for a ‘European Union’ complete with Senate and court system, or, in the nineteenth century, the Catholic reactionary Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821) 1975 [1850]: 193), who argued for ‘an universal republic, under the measured supremacy of the supreme spiritual power [the pope].’ Protestant thinkers might consider organizing Europe to promote peaceful relations, but insisted on preserving states as sovereign entities.

p. 462 British elites fit the general pattern, but with important deviations. Around 1900 a federalist movement emerged, driven primarily by Catholic intellectuals. Cardinals John Henry Newman (1879–90) and Henry Edward Manning (1865–92), Hilaire Belloc (1870–1953), and Christopher Dawson (1889–1970) all saw Catholicism as the cultural glue binding Europe together (Bugge, 1993). As Belloc famously put it, ‘The Church is Europe: and Europe is the Church’ (Belloc, 1962: 25). Lord Lothian (né: Philip Kerr, 1882–1940), a staunch Catholic who later converted to Christian Science, combined the ideal of medieval Christendom with ideas of the American founding, envisioning a federal structure for the British Empire. By the mid-1930s he was convinced that war could be avoided only by the abolition of national sovereignty in favour of new global institutions empowered to enforce international law. Lothian’s writings led several Oxford graduates to form the Federal Union, which attracted some prominent academics and politicians, most of them Protestants (Turner, 1988). These ideas made little impact on British political debate, but what the federalists failed to achieve at home, they accomplished overseas as Lothian’s writings were discovered by Altiero Spinelli (1906–86) and Ernesto Rossi (1897–1967) on the Italian prison island of Ventotene and incorporated into a 1941 manifesto, which served as the political programme for much of the non-Communist Resistance (Bosco, 1988).

Some Protestants were fascinated by notions of European unity, but the idea of Europe was always going to be problematic if it meant the wholesale rejection of state sovereignty. Protestant national identities and anti-continental (anti-Catholic) sentiments remained potent long into the twentieth century. Joining an integration project with an indeterminate end point was never going to be easy. And so it proved in 1950.



## Protestantism and the founding of the European Community

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On 9 May 1950 French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman issued his famous Declaration calling for joint management of the coal and steel industries as a step towards ‘economic unification’ and ‘European federation’. The post-war prospect of an integrating Europe forced Protestant states to decide on their strategy: would they join the continent in unifying national economies—and eventually their polities—or remain aloof and seek less intrusive ways to cooperate? At a deeper existential level, the Anglo-Nordics had to ask: did they feel ‘European’ enough to integrate with Europe?

The answer for Protestants was ambivalence. They certainly understood that their countries from Iceland to Switzerland were geographically part of Europe. They also knew that they shared a common classical and medieval culture and a recent history of disastrous warfare. But was all of that enough to overcome centuries of national chosenness and anti-Catholicism? Perhaps. But first Protestant Europe hesitated.

The British were the first to waver. The Schuman Declaration surprised British foreign secretary Ernest Bevin, who reacted angrily and negatively to the proposal. The British were not interested in talks that *assumed* agreement on the principle of supranationalism and the creation of a European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). They wanted to debate the principle first, but the continentals would not agree, so Britain refused to participate in negotiations.

From Britain’s refusal to join the ECSC negotiations, through its rejection of the European Defence Community, to its early participation in and then withdrawal from the Messina Process (leading to creation of the European Economic Community) (EEC), British elites vigorously promoted a very different vision. True, Winston Churchill had called for ‘a kind of United States of Europe’ in his 1946 Zürich speech and had served as honorary chair of the 1948 Hague Congress, which led to establishment of the Council of Europe. But commitment to the Commonwealth and Britain’s great power status kept Churchill from envisioning the UK as part of a federal Europe: ‘We are with Europe, but not of it’ (Kaiser, 1996: 10)—which admirably summarizes post-war British attitudes.

British elites eagerly sought to cooperate with their European partners, but opposed collaboration that would lead, either purposely or accidentally, to loss of sovereignty. Moreover, they bristled at any hint of political cooperation that might lead to federation. As Anthony Eden stated in 1952, Britain could never join a European federation because ‘this is something we know in our bones we cannot do’ (Charlton, 1983: 159). Britain offered an intergovernmental (and free trade) alternative to supranational integration throughout the 1950s, only to be rebuffed repeatedly. Eventually Britain and its mostly Nordic partners formed the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) as an intergovernmental alternative to the supranational EEC.

The Nordics approached continental integration with reticence similar to Britain’s. They too perceived ‘Europe’ as a place to visit (Hansen and Wæver, 2002). They hesitated to join the ECSC, despite that fact that they all were small countries caught between superpowers. Iceland, for instance, was newly independent and had no interest in federating with countries far away, although it did join intergovernmental NATO for protection. Finland was alienated from its Western neighbours (after siding with the Germans in the Second World War) and still too close to the USSR for comfort. It established a Western-style democracy and felt culturally Western, but tried to avoid any economic organization distrusted by the Soviets. Sweden maintained armed neutrality during the Cold War and rejected integration as incompatible with that neutrality and undesirable on principle. Swedish elites, however, pressed for Nordic and, even, continental economic cooperation, including a European free trade area, but only on an intergovernmental basis.

Norway and Denmark were planted firmly in NATO, but like Sweden they favoured Nordic cooperation and continental free trade, eventually joining the UK and Sweden in founding EFTA. When their most important trading partner, Britain, decided in the early 1960s that its economic interests required EEC membership,

Denmark and Norway joined membership talks (Sweden sought only an association agreement). Negotiations did not go well. Britain rejected an open-ended commitment to closer integration and demanded a detailed set of legal rights and obligations, upsetting EEC negotiators. The British wanted closer business partners; the Europeans hoped to expand the family. French President Charles de Gaulle eventually scuttled the talks: Britain was simply not 'one of us' (Ludlow, 1997).

p. 464 Running through debates on 'sovereignty', 'neutrality', and 'free trade areas' were deeper, more 'Protestant' objections. Anti-Catholic sentiment flourished in Protestant countries and to many Protestants (even 'cultural' ones), the European project looked very Catholic. Catholic-dominated Christian democratic parties drove the early integration process, and their most prominent leaders, Robert Schuman (France), Konrad Adenauer (West Germany), and Alcide de Gasperi (Italy) were all pious Catholics. Moreover, the Vatican, while not endorsing particular policies, made clear its preference for integration in the name of peace. Protestants found much of this distasteful. British Foreign Office officials were wary of the Catholic 'black international' and the devout bachelor Robert Schuman (Young, 1998). Labour politicians viewed Christian democratic parties as arms of the Roman Church and spoke darkly of a 'Catholic conspiracy', while Tory elites warned of a 'Rome-sponsored bloc of nations' trying to force 'England to surrender her sovereign power to a super-state' (Coupland, 2004: 390). The most extreme anti-Catholics were in Northern Ireland, led by the fiery Presbyterian preacher and politician Ian Paisley. His apocalyptic rhetoric, reminiscent of the early Reformers, featured the EEC (the 'Roman Catholic States of Europe') as the kingdom of the Antichrist, the final manifestation of the evil Roman Empire, and 'the greatest Catholic super State' in history (Paisley, 1975; Bruce, 1986).

The Nordics also demonstrated deep distrust of Catholic Europe. The Swedes—especially on the left—spoke disparagingly of the four 'Ks' (or 'Cs' in English): capitalism, Catholicism, conservatism, and colonialism (Trägårdh, 1999). Gunnar Myrdal saw the EEC states as 'a more primitive form of social organization than ours', asserting that 'it is above all the securely Protestant countries that have progressed economically and in other ways' (quoted in Trägårdh, 2002: 154). Conservative Christians, often free church heirs of nineteenth-century Norwegian and Swedish revivalists, were less circumspect. They equated 'Europe' with Catholicism and feared that joining the EEC would trigger a 'Catholic invasion', closing down churches and introducing 'Catholic ideas' and 'continental drinking habits' (Allen, 1979: 107). And Scandinavians of a more apocalyptic bent joined Paisley in denouncing the EEC as the kingdom of the Antichrist.

Not all resistance to integration in Protestant Europe was religious; strong national identities also played a role. Each Protestant country placed national sovereignty at the centre of any discussion of joining the EEC. Continental Christian democrats scorned these commitments as contributing to nationalism, which caused the disasters of the twentieth century. Protestants disagreed. National sovereignty—especially to the British and Swedes whose territories were never occupied by the Germans—had protected their liberties and must not be traded for a few defeated nations' mystical dream of European unity. Protestant nations still saw themselves as special—chosen—and were unwilling to join a federating Europe intent on eliminating national identities.

p. 465 Such commitments blocked or delayed Protestant countries' decisions to seek membership in the ECSC and EEC. When most leaders there finally decided that economic interests required membership, heated public debates developed. Few argued in favour of reducing or pooling sovereignty to bring organized peace and prosperity; rather, pro-European voices claimed that joining would preserve national sovereignty ↵ against relentless globalization and that the Community had already abandoned supranationalism and accepted intergovernmentalism. Thus, Prime Minister Harold Macmillan could argue in parliament in 1961 that the EEC posed no threat to British sovereignty: '[T]here is nothing in the Treaty of Rome which commits the members of EEC to any kind of federalist solution, nor could such a system be imposed on member countries' (Hansard, 1961b). Fellow Conservative Derek Walker-Smith responded with questions that still haunt the UK:

If we adhere to the Economic Community now and the Six proceed, as they are entitled to proceed, to the next stage of political union, what then is our position? If we do not want to go along with them on the political side, could we stay in on the economic side, or could we get out at that stage even if we wanted to? ... If we tried to come out of the Community ... would not the Six be justified in saying to us, 'But you knew all along of our enthusiasm for the next political step. If you did not share it, why did you join us in the first place?' Then the last state of our relations with Europe would be worse than the first.

(Hansard, 1961a)

A decade later when Britain was on the verge of joining, Prime Minister Edward Heath echoed Macmillan: 'There is no question of any erosion of essential national sovereignty ...' (quoted in Young, 1998: 246). British nationalists, such as Enoch Powell, would have none of this. In their minds, Britain was joining a second-rate foreign bloc intent on stripping the nation of its greatest political asset, parliamentary supremacy, and crushing it beneath an over-bureaucratized regulatory state.

Very similar debates occurred in the three Scandinavian countries in the 1960s and 1970s. Swedish leaders decided not to apply for EEC membership along with Britain, Denmark, and Norway after determining that accession would preclude an independent trade policy, require the abandonment of neutrality, force undesirable changes in social policy, and inevitably lead to federation. Norwegian officials achieved consensus on joining the EEC with the UK, but a public referendum rejected the argument that membership would not threaten Norwegian independence. Denmark chose to join, but only after pro-EEC forces argued that federalism was no longer realistic and, moreover, that Denmark would be a strong internal voice for intergovernmentalism. In all three cases, whether the country joined the EEC or not, the preferred Nordic method of integration was not Jean Monnet's vision of supranational integration based on new federal institutions. The Nordics preferred what Nils Andrén (1967) called 'cobweb integration', noncoercive, informal, pragmatic, and free of any taste of federalism. These Protestant countries on Europe's northern fringe were unwilling to sacrifice independence and national identities to a continental bloc.

But what of Protestants in the religiously mixed Netherlands and West Germany? Did they support or resist integration? The short answer is both. Protestant political elites in these founding states supported EEC membership, but favoured a different approach from that of their Catholic partners. While Catholic leaders in both the Netherlands and West Germany fully understood and supported the Monnet method, Protestants were often the slightly uncomfortable sceptics in the room: they supported European cooperation, but pushed for free trade alternatives to the Common Market and showed little enthusiasm for federation.

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In West Germany, Protestants were led by Minister of Economic Affairs Ludwig Erhard, an advocate of free market and Atlanticist policies within post-war Adenauer governments and, later, within his own (Lachmann, 2016). Erhard, influenced by the Swiss Lutheran economist Wilhelm Röpke, resisted the EEC's creation 'because of its protectionist and *dirigiste* elements', preferring the British proposal for a wide free trade area (Lee, 1995: 43). Like Röpke, Erhard rejected the top-down Monnet integration method in favour of a bottom-up organic approach that could move Europe very slowly and naturally towards political unity. Federalism as a guiding strategy would produce centralized decision making, multiple bureaucracies, and intrusive regulations. Erhard envisioned a far less coercive form of integration, but lost most of his battles within the government (Granieri, 2003).

The situation in the Netherlands was more complicated. The confessional Protestant parties, including the large, more centrist Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP), initially resisted the Netherlands' integration with its Catholic neighbours. As one ARP official sneered, 'I take note of the strong Roman Catholic and socialist influences upon this [European] venture' (Vollaard, 2006: 282). But it was soon clear the Netherlands would join the integration process and most Protestants fell into line. Fierce resistance was confined to Protestant

fringe parties, whose members often saw the EEC in apocalyptic terms, as a step towards world government and the final judgment of God. Nevertheless, mainstream Protestant leaders preferred a free trade area rather than an interventionist European state, seen as the desired option of both Catholics and socialists. In any event, the Netherlands usually preferred economic over political integration, freer trade, Atlantic ties, British membership, councils of ministers, and collective institutions to lock in the commitments of the big Member States. Dutch policy, then, often favoured supranational solutions, but with a strong whiff of Protestant reluctance (Voorhoeve, 1979).

## The awkward squad

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Despite their early ambivalence, Britain and Denmark entered the European Community (EC) in 1973; Finland and Sweden acceded to the successor EU in 1995. But Norwegian voters rejected membership twice (1972 and 1994); the Swiss electorate voted against opening membership talks in 2001; and Iceland has nibbled on membership, but never swallowed. The Protestant states who entered did so on pragmatic grounds with little interest in European federation. They vocally resisted policies that deepened integration, but proved hard-working and cooperative in other areas. In short, they were European partners, but often awkward ones (George, 1998; Gstöhl, 2002).

p. 467 Protestant complaints were very predictable: they resisted attempts to reduce the freedom of Member States and enhance the power of supranational institutions. In the 1970s, for instance, both Britain and Denmark objected to direct election to the European Parliament and Britain refused to join the Exchange Rate Mechanism that stabilized European currencies. The early 1980s were dominated by Margaret Thatcher, a Methodist lay preacher's daughter, and her demand for a rebate on Britain's contribution to the Common Agriculture Policy. Settling the British Budgetary Question (1984) brought only partial peace. Britain and Denmark soon doomed the European Parliament's federalist draft 'Treaty on European Union' with their strong objections. But they pressed to complete the single market (eventually codified in the Single European Act of 1986), while simultaneously resisting supranational means of building and governing it, such as use of Qualified Majority Voting in the Council of Ministers. Both Britain and Denmark stood apart from the early Schengen Agreement creating a borderless region (although Denmark, and even Iceland and Norway, eventually joined) and both countries strongly objected to major parts of the Maastricht Treaty (1992). The new John Major government in Britain nearly collapsed trying to convince parliament (successfully as it turned out) to approve a treaty that did not require Britain to adopt the single currency or the so-called 'social chapter' unifying citizen and labour rights. Denmark's government put the treaty to the electorate and was stunned by its defeat. The voters approved the treaty only in a second referendum after Denmark opted out of most of the important bits, including the single currency. In the early 2000s both Danish and Swedish voters rejected adoption of the euro, leaving Finland as the only Protestant state adopting the single currency. Moreover, only Finland ratified the failed 2004 'Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe', and only by parliamentary vote, not in a referendum.

The second decade of the twenty-first century was dominated by the financial crisis and migration issues. In both cases Protestant states took similar stances. The economic meltdown pitted indebted Southern countries against their richer and less troubled Northern and heavily Protestant Eurozone partners. When Greece, Spain, Portugal, Cyprus, Italy—and as an outlier, Ireland—begged for bailouts, the Northern Eurozone states of Germany (led by Angela Merkel, another Protestant minister's daughter), the Netherlands, and Finland demanded austerity. As a test of EU solidarity, the financial crisis barely passed, and not without bitterness on both sides. As for migration, two issues confronted the Protestant Member States. The first was intra-EU migration, which most deeply affected the UK. Britain proved a jobs magnet for EU workers, particularly Eastern Europeans using their right of free movement to flood into the cities and countryside. This proved significant as British officials' inability to stop migration from Member States

undoubtedly contributed to the 2016 referendum vote to leave the EU. Other Protestant states were too far from global trouble zones to be front-line destinations for refugees, but most—particularly Germany—were where migrants wanted to settle. Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden were at first generous in welcoming displaced people, while Denmark and Finland held back. Germany dramatically opened its borders to one million refugees in 2015 to manage an immediate ↴ crisis, but later struck an agreement with Turkey to restrict the flow. Nevertheless, the political fallout was already visible. All Protestant Member States now have rising political movements opposing more immigration (with some calling for deportations) and all are slowly hardening their borders to migrants.

In addition to the historical evidence, some empirical studies show that Protestant states—those with significant Protestant populations—are more institutionally sceptical of integration. Ivy Hamerly (2012), for instance, demonstrates that the presence of Protestants in government at the time when parliamentary EU oversight committees are formed produces closer scrutiny of EU actions. Scholars have also discovered a strong relationship between the strength of Protestant populations and the number of ‘enhanced cooperation’ groupings that member nations join, even controlling for date of accession and GDP per capita (Nelsen and Guth, 2015).<sup>1</sup> Such findings prompt close consideration of the institutional and individual bases for these historical and contemporary differences.

## Churches, political parties, and interest groups

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Protestant churches, political parties, and interest groups might be expected to demonstrate less enthusiasm for integration, especially in federalist form, than corresponding Catholic organizations. On the whole, the evidence substantiates this thesis, but with some nuance with respect to internal Protestant divisions.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Protestant churches everywhere were shaken by the rise of Darwinism and historical criticism of the Bible. These challenges to traditional Christian beliefs split Protestantism between established (or ‘mainline’) churches that usually accepted modern methods of inquiry and adjusted their beliefs and practices accordingly, and evangelical or fundamentalist churches that rejected these modern challenges. The division, however, was not clean; many mainline Christians, especially among the laity, but also some clergy, either rejected the new ‘modernism’, or ignored its presence. This opened a clergy–laity split in the established Protestant churches.

Modernism brought changes to Protestant theology and liturgy that weakened its sectarian nature. Mainline churches took steps towards ending historic divisions. An ecumenical movement took institutional form in the World Council of Churches ↴ (WCC) created in 1948. Although the WCC focused on promoting world peace through inter-denominational cooperation, its foreign policy wing, the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, maintained close contact with the federalist United Europe Movement. Exchanges between the French Socialist politician and committed Protestant André Philip and WCC Secretary General Willem Visser ‘t Hoof gave rise to the Ecumenical Commission on European Cooperation (ECEC), chaired by Philip and comprising Protestant politicians and churchmen. The Commission launched officially in 1951 and began communicating with a wide range of political and religious leaders, hoping to discover ‘new and creative solutions for [the] problems of the European community, and to stimulate the Churches to act constructively in this realm’ (Leustean, 2011: 459). In 1954 the ECEC changed its name to the Committee on the Christian Responsibility for European Cooperation (CCREC) to avoid any appearance of speaking for the ecumenical movement, and in 1966 became the Christian Study Group for European Unity, continuing its work until 1974. Several additional organizations formed or re-formed in the 1960s and 1970s: the Consultative Committee of the Churches for the European Communities, the Commission of Churches for

the European Communities, the Ecumenical Centre for Church and Society, Brussels, and perhaps most important, the Conference of European Churches (Leustean, 2014).

Despite the best efforts of ecumenical leaders to mobilize their institutions behind integration, the churches resisted. For one thing, a residue of anti-Catholicism remained, particularly in the pews. Members of the Berlin-Brandenburg Lay Assembly, for instance, saw the ECEC as the tool of a 'Catholic French Western Europe masked beneath a veneer of Christian pathos' (Leustean, 2014: 39), while other laity feared that European unity was 'a device of the Roman Catholic Church ...' (Leustean, 2014: 52). Even the CCREC worried about 'attempts to restore the medieval pattern of a Christendom in which one particular church has a place of exclusive privilege and power', a veiled reference to the Roman Church (Leustean, 2014: 53). Some churches tried to guide parishioners in support of integration, but could not elicit much enthusiasm. For instance, after a long silence the British Council of Churches published a 1967 report that 'on balance' favoured Britain's entry into the EC (which it did not see as a 'federal State in the making'), but still declined 'to pronounce a verdict for or against such entry' (Nelsen and Guth, 2015: 299). Nordic churches followed much the same desultory approach in the 1990s when their countries considered membership (Sundback, 2001–2). On the whole, mainline Protestant churches had little practice in transnational cooperation and found little reason to get involved. As Lucian N. Leustean (2014: 176) put it: 'Churches remained attached to national interests, with limited reflection transcending local allegiances.'

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If mainline churches were ambivalent about European unity, 'sectarians' had no problem deciding whose side God was on. These small, usually politically inconsequential churches sprinkled across Northern Europe preserved the spirit of the Reformation in their Biblical literalism, conservative theology, and anti-Catholicism. Clergy and laity alike reserved particular scorn for the ecumenism that diluted Protestant distinctiveness. And they opposed a European integration that promoted secularism, undermined national identity, and opened the continent to Vatican influence. Some went even further in their anti-Catholicism and apocalyptic interpretations of the EU: they took offence at the EU flag with its deep blue background and twelve stars, recalling the Madonna; they bridled at the 'Europa stamp' (with its depiction of the Myth of Europa), which recalled the biblical 'whore of Babylon'; and they scorned the Parliament Building in Strasbourg, built to look like the unfinished Tower of Babel. In 2000 Northern Ireland's Ian Paisley, then a European Parliament member, called it 'pure folly' that Christians would 'want to join the final apostasy of Babylon'. Others from Britain, Denmark, and Norway continue this tradition today by labelling the EU a diabolical 'empire' intent on world domination, while small sects in the Netherlands and Germany also claim an evil cosmic role for Europe (Nelsen and Guth, 2017).

Whatever the impact of religious institutions, anti-integration perspectives were seldom embedded in religious parties. Protestantism, unlike Catholicism, embraced the liberal states emerging in the nineteenth century and seldom produced political parties. When they did form, mostly in the mid-twentieth century, it was as counters to the increasing secularization of liberal and socialist parties. The exception was in the Netherlands where the influential Anti-Revolutionary Party was created in 1879 to challenge liberalism in church and politics. The fractious nature of Dutch Protestantism spilled into politics with several Reformed sects eventually creating their own parties—including the Christian Historical Union (CHU, 1904), Political Reformed Party (*Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij*, SGP, 1918), and Reformed Political Alliance (1948). Eventually mergers created the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA, 1980) and Christian Union (2000) (Vollaard, 2006). Other small Protestant parties appeared in Norway (1933), Finland (1958), Sweden (1964), and Denmark (1970). And Northern Ireland saw the formation of the Ulster Unionist Party (1905) and Paisley's Ulster Democratic Unionist Party (1971). The UK as a whole did not spawn a confessional party, but in West Germany the Christian Democratic Union (CDU, 1949) was predominantly Catholic, but attracted many Protestants as well.

With the exception of the German CDU and Dutch CDA, with their strong Catholic presence, Protestant parties have been Eurosceptical (Madeley, 2012). The Northern Irish parties and the Dutch SGP have taken



the hardest line on the EU, while most others have been ‘softer’ as their priorities have evolved away from national sovereignty as a core principle towards transnational ‘public justice’ (Luitwieler, 2016). The Nordic parties have often been split between a more pro-EU clergy, who reflect the ecumenism of some post-war church leaders, and a more sceptical laity (Sundback, 2001–2). In sum, Protestant party politics, like the churches, are divided between a large ‘mainline’ group open to integration, if not terribly enthusiastic, and a smaller, fractious conservative wing that maintains the distinctive Protestant commitment to national identity and distrust of continental (that is, Catholic) motives (Minkenberg, 2009; Mudrov, 2014).

p. 471 Finally, religious interest group politics also follows the confessional divide. As noted above, CEC was one of the first religious organizations with regular contact with Community officials, but that was unusual. Few Protestant organizations established a Brussels presence before the mid-1970s, with more opening offices after the launch of the single market project in the mid-1980s. The pace of creation has increased, but Catholic groups still dominate religious representation in the EU (Leustean, 2013; Turner, 2013). Most Protestant lobbies are official church representatives, with the Evangelical Church of Germany the first to establish an office in 1990 and the Church of England following belatedly in 2008 (Hill, 2009). In addition to CEC, more theologically conservative inter-church organizations have established a presence, including the European Evangelical Alliance (1994) and the Pentecostal European Fellowship (2005) (Leustean, 2013).

These religious groups have found a mild welcome in Brussels. Although EU institutions remain staunchly secular (Foret, 2014), a ‘structured’ dialogue with religious organizations has existed since Jacques Delors established a group of advisors (Lacroix Group) in the late 1980s. The Bureau of European Policy Advisors is now charged with meeting the Lisbon Treaty’s Article 17 requirement for ‘open, transparent, and regular dialogue’ with representatives of religious and humanist traditions. No protocol sets out which religious organizations are invited, which EU institutions participate, or how many meetings are required. In practice the Commission president determines the importance—including regularity—of the official contacts. More frequent contacts, of course, do occur in less public, more intimate settings, where deeper relationships are nurtured. One example is the growing European Prayer Breakfast, held annually at the European Parliament, which draws leaders from a broad range of Christian (including Pentecostal, Evangelical, mainline Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Coptic), Jewish, and Muslim traditions. But most Protestant organizations involved in the official dialogue are mainline organizations, with more conservative groups (of all religious traditions) largely excluded. The agendas are thin on content, and participants often complain that few policies are ever discussed. In short, ‘dialogue’ is more an opportunity to smile, shake hands, and celebrate diversity than a serious attempt to engage faith communities on issues with clear religious dimensions, such as ‘life’ questions, migration, terrorism, and foreign policy (Madeley, 2013).

## Attitudes and identity

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These institutional patterns are undergirded by the preferences of the faithful. Two decades of public opinion research has established a central truth: European Protestants have been less enamoured of integration than Catholics. That pattern has persisted over time, across Member States and under controls for other measurable influences. A similar finding has emerged when studying identity: Protestants are less inclined than Catholics to see themselves as ‘European’ and more often restrict personal identities to their national one. These patterns should come as no surprise.

p. 472 Although little data exists on religious attitudes towards integration before the 1970s, Protestants in EC Member States—excepting Reformed fundamentalists in the Netherlands—probably joined the so-called permissive consensus that enabled elites to push integration forward in the 1950s and 1960s (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970). That could not be said of voting publics in the Anglo-Nordic Protestant North where

the membership question opened gaping cleavages. The Norwegian electorate—after an emotional campaign—rejected membership by 54 to 46 per cent. Britain and Denmark were also divided, but eventually over 60 per cent of the voters in each country favoured membership. In both countries, however, public opinion pressured leaders to restrain the EC's federalist impulses.

Not until 1970 did the Community begin systematically surveying European attitudes, at first sporadically, and then regularly as the *Eurobarometer*. Using this data, early researchers focused on economic conditions and personal benefits to explain public support for integration (Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993; Gabel, 1998). Somewhat later scholars began to consider religion as a determinant of EU support (for an exception, see Mac Iver, 1989). Results were very clear: Catholics demonstrated more support for the EC/EU than members of other religions or seculars, and observant Catholics were more positive than their less committed brethren. Protestants, on the other hand, showed much less enthusiasm for integration—but the results were complicated. Protestant devotion sometimes worked mildly in favour of integration, but nominal Protestants always strongly opposed the EU (Nelsen, Guth, and Fraser, 2001; Nelsen, Guth, and Highsmith, 2011).

Regrettably, most surveys were insufficiently granular to determine the attitudes of sectarian Protestants, but where they can be identified, they were more hostile to integration than Catholics or those with no denominational identity. A subsequent study on European youth aged 15–24 demonstrated the usual pattern among Catholics, but found among Protestants an even greater tendency for the devout to support the EU, with the less devout hardened against integration. The tendency was most visible in Northern Ireland and the Nordic countries where belonging to a church-related group decreased support for the EU (Nelsen and Guth, 2003). Finally, an early study found that Catholic devotion helped explain female support for the EU (Nelsen and Guth, 2000).

More recent studies of religion and attitudes towards integration have elaborated on the basic model. Mainstream scholarship has broadened beyond utilitarian approaches to attitude formation to include culture, especially religion (Hooghe and Marks, 2005; McLaren, 2006; Boomgaarden and Freire, 2009). Recent analysis confirms previous patterns, but also points in new directions. As we would expect, Protestant states demonstrate far less support for the transformation of the EU into a 'federation of Nation-States' than do Catholic states (Nelsen and Guth, 2015). Again, as expected, recent studies show that confessional culture remains a predictor of attitudes towards the EU (Scherer, 2015), but differences between Catholics and Protestants now seem to be narrowing (Nelsen, Guth, and Highsmith, 2011). Support for integration seems to be falling among Catholics, perhaps because of the recent financial crisis. At the same time, by some measures, support is rising among Protestants, producing a convergence of EU attitudes at a level somewhat less supportive of integration than for Europeans with no religious identity. In addition, devout Protestants have joined devout Catholics in supporting integration, meaning that in general, Europeans who regularly practice their religion tend to evaluate the EU more favourably than do nominally religious or secular identifiers. The important exception is in the East where devout Catholics are increasingly Eurosceptical—perhaps in response to the secular nature of EU politics and liberal sentiments expressed by EU politicians and officials on issues such as abortion and human embryonic stem cell research (Mondo and Close, 2018). Despite the continued impact of religion on European attitudes, then, the effect is clearly diminishing. And recent cohort analysis underlines the fact that younger Europeans—unlike their older neighbours—are mildly or not at all influenced by their confessional cultures. Thus, if current trends hold, religion—including Protestantism—will disappear as an independent factor shaping attitudes towards Europe (Nelsen and Guth, 2020).

Discerning religious patterns among Brussels elites is more difficult. Casual observation of key European leaders turns up interesting clues: integration has often been championed by devout Catholics, including Schuman, Adenauer, and de Gasperi, but also Helmut Kohl and the energetic Commission President Jacques Delors (1985–95), while those resisting federalist advances were often Protestants, including many British



and Nordic prime ministers, led by Margaret Thatcher, but also (as mentioned above) Erhard and Merkel (Packer, 2014). More systematic studies of elites, however, have produced some interesting findings. Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) tend to be slightly more secular than their constituents, but religion does matter to them as an ‘identity marker’ and shaper of their overall ‘world vision’, if a relatively weak factor in decision making (Foret, 2015). The elite–mass gap in Member States—where elites are more supportive of integration than their general populations—is greater in Protestant and mixed states (Müller, Jenny, and Ecker, 2012) and Commission officials from countries where Protestants constitute a significant population are more likely to believe EU leadership should be exercised by Member States rather than the Commission or European Parliament (Dehousse and Thompson, 2012). Best (2012) argues that religion plays no role in shaping attitudes towards integration among national elites, but if there is any influence, it is Catholics who are the most sceptical. But another study shows that elites in Protestant countries (no matter what their personal religious identification) are less likely to support integration than those in Catholic or mixed Member States (Lazić *et al.*, 2012). In sum, current European elites appear less influenced by religion than their citizens are, but that weak influence does tend to push them in expected directions.

Finally, to what extent do Protestants consider themselves ‘European’? Much depends on the definition of European—and even what it means to ‘identify’ with a region (Bruter, 2005). Most studies attempting to count those who identify with Europe come to a similar conclusion: there aren’t many (Fuchs, Guinaudeau, and Schubert, 2009). Furthermore, about half the population considers European identity irrelevant or even abhorrent. Few studies examine the role of religion in shaping identity, but at the national level a strong relationship exists between the proportion of Protestants and that of citizens identifying exclusively with the nation–state (Nelsen and Guth, 2015). At the individual level, Catholics are more likely to identify as Europeans than those from other religious traditions (Green, 2007). Additional evidence comes from citizen identification with the EU flag. Protestants are much less likely than Catholics to identify with the flag, especially when they are in the majority—even when controlling for other variables. But there are important exceptions: committed Protestants show greater affection for the flag than other Protestants (a phenomenon discussed above) and Protestants in majority Catholic countries demonstrate more European identification, perhaps indicating modest emotional socialization (Nelsen and Guth, 2016).

In short, despite some important (and mostly recent) qualifications, little doubt remains that Protestants, over time and across Europe, have been more suspicious of integration and less willing to identify as Europeans than Catholics. Religion—or more accurately, confessional culture—has played a powerful, independent (and statistically significant) role in shaping attitudes and identities. But European society is evolving. Secularization has diminished religion’s impact and, perhaps, led to the convergence of Protestant and Catholic attitudes, with religious commitment giving the pro–European side a slight boost. The religious fringes, however, look different. Fundamentalist and apocalyptic Protestants have always opposed integration (Hagevi, 2002) and they are now joined by some traditionalist Catholics in an ironic Protestant–Catholic Eurosceptical convergence.

## Conclusion

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Protestants in an integrating Europe have been reluctant and awkward. Now the largest culturally Protestant EU member, the United Kingdom, has exited. An analysis of the Brexit referendum in June 2016 demonstrates a variant on a familiar pattern: cultural Protestants and conservative Protestant groups deeply opposed EU membership (unlike the relatively small number of Catholics), but devout Protestants were more favourable (Glencross, 2016). Research reveals that the apocalypse-minded Protestants, particularly the Pentecostals, led the march towards a British exit, but Anglicans were close behind, followed by the Church of Scotland, the Methodists, and the Baptists (Nelsen and Guth, 2017; Kolpinskaya and Fox, 2019). In all cases, with the exception of the small sects, religious commitment pushed denominational identifiers in a 'remain' direction, perhaps reflecting ecumenical leanings of clergy. Churches cannot be directly blamed for Britain's decision to withdraw from the EU: most, in fact, took cautiously 'neutral' stances with a majority of leading clergy leaning towards 'remain'. But Britain's Protestant confessional culture made it very difficult for the UK to embrace the integration project emotionally.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps de Gaulle was right: Britain was never European, never quite 'one of us'.

p. 475 The original six members of the ECSC mistakenly believed that the European Community could incorporate two different visions of integration in an ever-closer union. Protestant Europeans were never going to join wholeheartedly: their sense of community simply would not permit erosion of national identity and sovereign independence. Had the Europe of 1958 created a broad free trade area with minimal institutional scaffolding, the continent might have managed its cultural diversity rather better. That diversity looks to be gaining the upper hand, threatening the very real achievements of 'Europe'.

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## Notes

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- 1     Enhanced cooperation 'allows a group of EU member states to pursue deeper integration (usually in a specific policy area) beyond a level acceptable to their other partners' (Nelsen and Guth, 2015: 267). Examples include: the Schengen Area, the Eurozone, the Fiscal Compact (technically outside the EU legal structure), the Common Security and Defence Policy, the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice, the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the Prüm Convention (enhances the Schengen Agreement), and the European Divorce Law.
- 2     Scottish nationalists, in our view, see membership in the EU in instrumental rather than emotional terms. In terms of identity and support for the EU, they look more like other Protestants.



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## The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Europe

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### CHAPTER

## 27 Eastern Orthodoxy and Europe

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### Abstract

This chapter considers the relationship between ‘Orthodoxies’ and ‘Europes’, highlighting the multiplicity of Eastern Christian Orthodox approaches and attitudes towards Europe, from one majority Orthodox national context to another and one historical period to another, ranging from anti-Europeanism (and anti-Westernism) to Europhilism. It also draws attention to differences in Orthodox stances on the idea of Europe, on the one hand, and the political reality of the European unification project, on the other. A temporal perspective is particularly relevant in changing attitudes to the European Union. Special attention is paid to external perspectives on the relationship between ‘Orthodoxy’ and ‘Europe’, often politicized and influenced by the political turmoil in the Balkans. The chapter closes with reference to the situation of flux characterizing contemporary conceptions of Europe, and the impact of the latter on ‘Orthodoxy’ in relation to ‘Europe’.

**Keywords:** [Europe](#), [European Union](#), [Orthodoxies](#), [anti-Europeanism](#), [Europhilism](#), [Balkans](#), [temporal perspective](#)

**Subject:** [History of Religion](#), [Religion](#)

**Series:** [Oxford Handbooks](#)

THE mere title of this chapter, and of the religious tradition in question, betrays a distinction from the West, to which Europe most firmly belongs.<sup>1</sup> In a sense this chapter completes the picture of the European history of Christianity presented in this Part of the Handbook with respect to Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, whereby the former is closely allied with ideas of Europe and the latter is largely a religious ‘other’. Eastern Orthodoxy represents, in this narrative, an additional, and far more distant ‘other’ of Europe.

The relationship of the Orthodox tradition to Europe is, however, more complicated than the geographic referent in its naming suggests: indeed, the rendering of a unified picture of ‘Orthodoxy’ in relation to ‘Europe’ is difficult for several reasons. First, because of the significant degree of division which defines Orthodoxy both historically and in contemporary terms: there are as many relationships of Orthodoxy to Europe as there are ‘Orthodoxies’, in terms of the multiplicity of national churches, and even more poignantly in terms of the cacophony between these. Similarly, there is a multiplicity of ‘Europes’ to which

Orthodoxies are relating, depending on the temporal context in question. Second, there are different conceptions of ‘Europe’ at stake, with the idea of Europe, on the one hand, and the political reality of the European unification project, on the other, often being conflated. Related to the latter, this relationship changes over time depending on the stage in that country’s relation to the European Union (EU). Finally, the depiction of this relationship will differ depending on the vantage point taken, viewed ↴ from within Orthodox contexts or from without: there are perceptions of the relationship internal to Orthodoxy, and there are external perceptions. These are not always or even often in sync, though in some cases there is overlap.

This chapter begins with a temporary suspension of all of the above caveats in order to offer a schematic, generalized picture of Eastern Orthodoxy in relation to Europe, entailing a brief historical overview and reference to the development of differences in theology and dogma between Eastern and Western Christianity. It then nuances that picture by taking each of the above caveats as the subject of more detailed exploration. The chapter is structured accordingly into those four main sections, before closing with reflections on changes brought about by the European financial and refugee crises, both of which have challenged conceptions of Europe and of European identity.

## The grand narrative on Eastern Orthodoxy’s place in (Western) Europe

As suggested above, this chapter adds a layer to the historical overviews presenting the Roman Catholic and Protestant experiences in relation to the concept of Europe. Both the latter, together with the chapter on Islam, demonstrate the centrality of Christendom to the idea of Europe. As Hugh Seton-Watson has noted, ‘the interweaving of the notions of Europe and Christendom is a fact of history which even the most brilliant sophistry cannot undo’ (Seton-Watson, 1985: 16). In an essay on the religious condition of Europe, David Martin writes that ‘Religion is one reason why older maps exist like older paintings underneath contemporary configurations’ (Martin, 1994: 14). Indeed, ‘ideas of Europe’ have been permeated with references to Christianity and, more precisely, to that corresponding to the Western side of the Great Schism in the Christian Church; Europe’s religious history, including its unity and divisions, exists underneath conceptions of the *meaning* of Europe.

The East–West dichotomy in conceptions of Europe is prevalent in contemporary writing on Europe written from historical, sociological and international relations perspectives. As Gerard Delanty’s *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality* contends: ‘it should not be forgotten that the divisions between Roman Catholic and Protestant regions in western Europe were never as great as the gulf that separated Latin Christianity from Greek Christianity’ (1995: 67). He posits that the idea of Europe as Occident fills the space left behind by Christianity as a unifying factor: ‘When the idea of Europe replaced Christendom as the dominant cultural model, the notion of the Occident was retained as its referent’ (1995: 68). Thus, the idea of Europe became a ‘secular surrogate’ for Christendom, and one marked clearly as Western, geographically, theologically, and culturally.

Where there is no such explicit East–West distinction in scholarship, it is often found implicitly or by default through what is *not* included. Noting for example how many ↴ central works in sociology of religion do not engage with Eastern Christianity, one pair of scholars argues that ‘despite the considerable significance of Eastern Orthodox Christianity both in terms of sheer numbers and historical significance there is in reality very little in the way of a sociology of it’ (McMylor and Vorozhishcheva, 2010: 462). Likewise, in the field of anthropology Chris Hann and Hermann Goltz (2010: 3–4) find in the ignorance of Eastern Orthodoxy an implicit othering of that faith. And in the fact that virtually no social science paradigms have been developed to understand patterns within Orthodox churches (as has been the case for Western Christian traditions), they find a profound ethnocentrism. Regarding the field of history, one

scholar writes ‘I know from experience that you can complete a doctorate in European history at the University of Oxford and know very little about Eastern Europe—and even less about the Orthodox Church’ (Osborne, 2003: 1); though the former would no longer be the case today, the latter may well be.

Political science and international relations also belong to the ‘explicit othering’ category, particularly that generated in the Cold War and immediate post-Cold War context. Samuel Huntington’s clash of civilizations thesis (1993, 1996) is a conspicuous example. According to Huntington, though nation-states will continue to act as the most powerful actors in world affairs, ‘The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future’ (1993: 22). Europe is divided into two civilizations, ‘Western’ and ‘Slavic-Orthodox’. Huntington argues that differences of religion, history, culture, tradition, and so on, are ‘far more fundamental than differences among political ideologies and political regimes’ (1993: 25), and the most divisive of these is religion. The European civilizational divide (which, in the Balkans, coincides with the geographic divisions between the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires), unites the Protestant and Catholic peoples of North and West in common experiences of European history (feudalism, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution) *against* the peoples to the East and South—the Orthodox and Muslim—whose experiences under the Ottoman or Tsarist Empires isolated them from the shaping events of the rest of Europe. Based upon these differences, ‘the Velvet Curtain of culture has replaced the Iron Curtain of ideology as the most significant dividing line in Europe’ (1993: 30–2).

Given the centrality of the East–West dichotomy to conceptions of Europe, and the consequences of the latter for the place of Christian Orthodoxy therein, it is worth considering the historical and doctrinal roots of the latter. According to George Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou, for several centuries after the establishment of the Christian Church, the categories of Western and Eastern served only to identify the two halves of the empire. The differences between the two halves were primarily linguistic and reflective of the political borders of the time, and ‘there is simply no surviving evidence that anyone in the late-ancient roman world understood such linguistic or geographical paradigms to be a marker of theological difference’ (2013: 3). The most obvious and imposing theological divisions developed around divergent conceptions of ecclesiastical authority and of the nature of the Trinity. In the West, supreme authority over ecclesiastical matters was bestowed upon the person of the pope, whose authority was granted in a direct line traceable to that of St Peter as head of the Christian Church and who was deemed infallible with reference to dogma. In the East, meanwhile, a less centralized system of five patriarchs of shared and equal authority developed, and the idea of human infallibility was rejected. A further divisive issue concerning dogma itself arose over conceptions of the nature of the Trinity when the Roman Church added to the Nicene Creed (the confession of the Christian faith common to both spheres of Christianity) the so-called *Filioque Clause*. The action is controversial for two reasons: first, the clause reflects an understanding of the nature of the Trinity which differs from that held in the Eastern Church; and second, though the Nicene Creed was claimed by both traditions, it was altered by the one without even consultation, much less agreement, of the other.

The ‘Great Schism’ of 1054 officially marks the division of the early Christian Church into the ‘Greek’ and ‘Roman’ Churches—Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. On 16 July that year, three papal legates made their way through a crowd of worshippers and up to the high altar of the church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople and delivered a bull of excommunication against the patriarch of the Greek Church and his followers. The following week the patriarch responded by anathematizing the papal legates, the bull itself, and everyone who accepted it. While these events symbolize a climax in the distancing between the two churches, they are by no means isolated: bishops of Rome and Constantinople had excommunicated one another on several occasions before that year; the patriarch did not excommunicate the pope himself at that time; and, in fact, only in 1204 was there a definitive break between the pope and the patriarch of the respective churches. The events and their extended time frame reveal that the schism was a gradual development of distinctions and antagonism between the two spheres of Christianity. The Byzantine Empire

grew around the city of Constantinople as psychological distance from the Latin West increased, and Byzantium developed the sense of being situated exactly between East and West, applying the geographical description of 'East' for Asia and 'West' for Europe.

But far more consequential for long-term relations between the two sides of European Christianity of the time were the centuries-long Western crusades in the East. The Crusades marked a turning point in Eastern attitudes towards the West by embedding 'a heretofore unprecedented animosity within the Eastern Christian consciousness against a collective "West"' (Demacopoulos and Papanikolaou, 2013). Psychological distance gave way to heightened tension during the Crusades, and particularly with the Fourth which led to the fall of Constantinople in 1204. Here the papal demand for submission to Rome reinforced the political detachment felt in relation to the Romans since Pope Leon III's consecration of Charlemagne as 'Emperor of the Romans'. Thus, for the Christianity of Byzantium, the West slowly became a distinct entity—a separate social and political world threatening its existence and development (Makrides, 1993: 106–7).

p. 484 Certainly, the developing anti-Western sentiments bred a feeling in the Eastern sphere of being unlike the West. The refusal of the Eastern episcopate to accept the pope as infallible and supreme head of all churches halted temporal support for the Church; the convention of papal infallibility henceforth became associated with the Latin West and the Roman Empire (Sherrard, 1995). The capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 brought an end to the Byzantine Empire and led to further divergences, political and cultural, between the Christian churches of East and West. For instance, the Roman Church continued in the tradition of consecrating and adopting temporal power in its ties with the Empire, while the Eastern Church under the Ottomans suddenly lost its role in collaboration with the ruling authority. As the Roman Church became further intertwined with Western society and ideology, the Eastern Church entered upon what turned out to be four centuries of the Eastern influence of the Turks.

Thus, in addition to the tension over the *filioque* controversy and the confrontation in the Crusades, the fall of the capital of Christianity in the East, Constantinople, to the Ottoman Empire entails a further major milestone in the deepening of the East–West divide. Most importantly, it marked the beginning of four centuries of growing distance between East and West, brought about, as noted above, by the divergence in experience of Christians in the West (Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment), and Christians in the East (prolonged intellectual, cultural, and economic decline).

The embracing of enlightenment ideas, which largely led to the national revolutions liberating Christians of the East from the Ottoman Empire, generated a warming to the West and its ideas in the short term. In the long term, however, it yielded a further distinction from the West because of the ways in which the Eastern part of Christianity has failed to *move on* from nationalist uprising to universalist values. Instead, by and large majority Orthodox countries have maintained a nationalist vision which distinguishes them from trends seen in the West.<sup>2</sup>

It is important to note that this vision also, and simultaneously, leads to fissures *within* today's Orthodox East. Ironically then, the enlightenment-inspired revolutions could be seen as a 'Westernization of Orthodoxy' (Demacopoulos and Papanikolaou, 2013: 10), but with the long-term effect of deepening of the East–West dichotomy (see also Leustean, 2014; Kitromilides, 2019).

Finally, another crucial milestone sealing the fate of much of Orthodox Christianity to be relegated to 'the other', is the experience of communist rule in most majority Orthodox countries (Chadwick, 1992; Leustean, 2010). As Sabrina Ramet indicates, no church can be understood outside its historical context, and

the four centuries of Ottoman rule, five centuries of tsarist rule (in Russia and Georgia) and more than four decades of communist rule ... inevitably shaped patterns of accommodation with state

authorities, strategies of survival, and perhaps also tendencies to see denials of church claims about morality in terms of profound ideological threat. (2006: 149)

p. 485 The bulk of national Orthodox churches went from an experience of oppression under the Ottoman Empire to brutal and violent repression under communism. Sapped of resources, theological, intellectual, and otherwise, the Orthodox churches found themselves weak in the face of the new political and cultural realities following the fall of communism (Leustean, 2010; Demacopoulos and Papanikolaou, 2013: 17). The result has been an ambivalent, at best, relationship to democracy (Prodromou, 2004): some of its tenets are embraced and promoted, but a tendency persists to cling to the privileges enjoyed in the political sphere and to sustain close church–state relations.

## Orthodoxies and Europe(s)

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As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, in spite of the generalized picture presented above, and because of the large degree of division within the Christian Orthodox Church, there are as many relationships of Orthodoxy to Europe as there are ‘Orthodoxies’. A selection of cases should suffice to give a sense of the differences between Orthodox relationships to Europe, noting in addition the important temporal dimensions regarding which ‘Europe’ the Orthodox context is relating to in a given historical period.

For example, in the 1980s and 1990s in Serbia, ‘Europe’ is largely viewed from the prism of the national conflicts in Yugoslavia: ‘The world outside of the country was perceived mainly as an external force that influenced domestic developments in one or another way’ (Buchenau, 2005: 59). According to Klaus Buchenau, Germany and the Vatican in particular were seen as the driving forces behind the international recognition of Croatia, a project which, in turn, was understood as an effort to establish a Catholic Central Europe. After 1993, when the USA, Britain and France entered this political context with their defence of Croats and Bosnians, a more general anti-Westernism developed. An official gazette of the Orthodox Church Patriarchate in Belgrade called on Serbs to work together on an alliance with Orthodox states, indicating that ‘They slaughtered us because we are an outpost of Orthodoxy. Had Rumanians, Bulgars or Greeks been in our place, they would have gone through the same. We were not killed as Serbs, but as Byzantines’ (cited in Buchenau, 2005: 72).

Anti-Catholicism merged with anti-Europeanism in this context (Perica, 2002). This fact was buttressed by explicit efforts by Croatian leaders to equate ‘Europeanness’ with Catholicism, increasingly constructing an opposition between ‘European’ Catholic Croatia and ‘non-European’ Orthodox Serbia. Buchenau tells us of a number of theologians who saw the ‘new world order’ as rooted in Catholic universalism and thus as a threat to Orthodoxy: ‘Even today there are intellectuals ... who tie themselves to the church and develop scenarios of culture clashes between Orthodox Christianity and the West’ (2005: 62). In this context, Europeanization was seen by many within the Orthodox Church in Serbia in a negative light, because the pro-Catholic discourse served as a justification for the separation of Croatia from the ‘European’ eastern parts of Yugoslavia and for the marginalization of Serbs in Croatia itself (Perica, 2002: 187; Buchenau, 2005: 73).

Looking at the Greek context and the stance adopted in the Byzantine years toward the Roman Catholic and Protestant West, strains of nationalistic elitism in Orthodox Greece struggled to resist the perceived Western influences of modernity, commercialism, materialism, and decadence (Varouxakis, 1995). This disposition emerged largely in reaction to extreme trends in the opposite direction: that is, indiscriminate absorption of all things European and a concomitant suppression of Byzantine heritage in order to assert the nation as Western and European after freedom from the Ottoman subjugation. Thus the ‘Orthodoxy as

nation' stance includes certain socio-religious movements opposing the Church's marginalization by the state and the massive introduction of western elements in the Greek culture (Makrides, 1993: 110–11): for instance, the reactionary rejection of the West as a whole and its modern scientific ideas, manifest in the Church's effort to prohibit their diffusion in Greece and in the admonition of parents for sending their children to Europe to study (Makrides, 1991: 55). In this context Orthodoxy became a noble cause for opposition to many aspects of the 'West', a term often confused with 'Europe' (Makrides, 1993: 104). Roman Catholicism (and subsequently, Protestantism) also became confused with the geographical terms 'West' and 'Europe'. The 'neo-orthodox' current of thought—spearheaded by several Greek intellectuals in the 1980s—includes a demarcation of Orthodox Christians from Roman Catholics and Protestants. Christos Yannaras, an influential theologian and professor in Greece and contributor to the neo-orthodox current, applies to Orthodoxy the framework of an East–West antithesis which is seen as a fundamental difference in ways of life (Makrides, 1994: 473): 'The whole problem of the Orthodox peoples at the moment is that they find themselves under the influence of the manner of everyday life, under the articulation and structure of the social life which the European modernity has imposed' (Yannaras, cited in INERPOST, 1996: 80).

Thus, as an extension of the aforementioned animosity felt toward the West, anti-Europeanism constitutes a powerful trend in Greek Orthodox circles. The dialectic relationship with Europe led to long-term tensions within Greek identity (Kokosalakis, 2004; Kokosalakis and Psimmenos, 2005). On the one hand, many Greeks wanted, from the very beginning of Greek modernity, to be part of Europe and they point to the central significance of classical antiquity for European civilization to justify their claim. On the other hand, they have always been afraid of being politically dominated and culturally absorbed by a strong Europe, which, despite its admiration for Ancient Hellas, never appreciated medieval or modern Greek culture (see also Makrides and Molokotos-Liederman, 2004).

Georgia offers us a rather different example: that of inter-Orthodox tension impacting on relations with Europe. To a large extent Georgian leaders' positive attitudes towards Europe have been defined by their negative attitudes towards Russia: stronger connections to Europe have been seen by pro-European political leaders as a way to free the country from Russian influence. But, as Nutsa Batiashvili suggests, 'Orthodoxy came to stand in the way of this ambitious yet auspicious objective' (2019: 166). It did this by communicating anti-Western sentiments through 'subliminal rhetoric'. For example, in a Christmas epistle in 1994, the Georgian patriarch claims that

The West is the world where everything is permitted and violence dominates. It is materially rich but spiritually poor, so it is strange and difficult for Georgians to accept.

(Batiashvili, 2019: 166)

Batiashvili describes the Georgian–Russian 'Orthodox brotherhood' as one of the most complex and contested relations between a former Empire and a post-colony. Pro-European forces in the country have had to counter the Orthodox Church's subtle rhetoric with rather less subtle calls for a divorce of the Georgian state from the Russian political orbit:

Are we so deaf as not to hear the voices of the killed bishops and priests, tortured by Russian imperialists and Russian communists? Are we so uneducated that we do not recall who has repainted our churches and erased our sacred frescos? Are we so blind today not to see the destruction of our churches by the same people ... ?

(Saakashvili, 2013)

The Georgian example raises a recurrent theme found in several majority Orthodox countries: political relations with Europe pitting Orthodox churches in direct opposition to their pro-European political



leaders. This has especially been the case in the light of efforts to accede to, or remain in positive standing with, the EU—the focus of the following section.

Before turning to this it is important to restate the argument of the present discussion and its applicability to other cases. The aim has been to highlight the diversity of relationships between Orthodoxy and Europe in majority national contexts, recognizing that each such relationship is unique, coloured by such factors as the political histories of each case, the role of ecclesiastical agency, and diplomatic relations with other countries (including sometimes other Orthodox countries).

The Orthodox Church of Ukraine is an apt example of the latter, due to the embeddedness of the national church in the conflicts between Russia and Ukraine especially in the aftermath of the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula by the Russian Federation in 2014. The East versus West dimension of this conflict is especially conspicuous (Marten, 2015). Meanwhile Bulgaria offers an interesting case of division *within* the national church, with the schism which developed in the aftermath of the collapse of communism, and which continued to divide the church for years to come (see Broun 2004). There is also the rather different example of Mount Athos (or, *Agio Oros*), a peninsula of Northern Greece comprised of twenty monasteries reflecting different majority Orthodox linguistic traditions; Athos has a separate legal status from the state of Greece and a separate ecclesiastical status from the Church of Greece as it is under the direct ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, but its monasteries retain rather individual identities, and distinctive orientations towards ↴ Europe. These further examples of exceptional cases reinforce the point that there are as many relationships between Orthodoxy and Europe as there are ‘Orthodoxies’.<sup>3</sup>

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## Europe and/or the European Union? A temporal perspective

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The conflating of Europe with the EU is not confined to Orthodox contexts. But it is worth noting some Orthodox specificities in how an historically ambivalent relation to the concept of Europe translates into more contemporary forms of ambivalence to the EU.

As William Wallace notes, ‘There has been a tendency since the optimistic years of the 1960s to identify “Europe” with the member states of the European Community’ (1990: 8). Increasingly, the continent’s most recognized boundaries are those drawn by the European integration project; for better or for worse, the EU is increasingly viewed as the indicator of what is ‘European’. Thus, the extent to which religion plays a role in contemporary ‘ideas of Europe’, particularly within the context of the EU project to create a common European identity, carries major significance for those nations which lie outside particular definitions of such an identity.

Historically, the concept of European identity has been a source of perplexity and debate, and it has certainly not been less so for the architects of European integration tasked with institutionalizing a ‘European identity’ for the EU. This effort has been doubly challenged by the financial and refugee crises riveting Europe since the first and second decades, respectively, of the twenty-first century. Though the Union claims no specific religious orientation, the role played by religion in the historical development of a cultural and political entity understood to be Europe cannot be denied. Religion surfaced as a particularly acute issue in connection with the EU’s relations with Turkey. ‘It would be a very great mistake to make the EU a religious or cultural entity’, declared Onur Oymen as secretary-general of the Turkish Foreign Ministry, ‘We do not want a cultural or religious iron curtain to replace the political iron curtain that we fought for 50 years to remove’ (Kinzer, 1997: 2). Meanwhile, aspiring Central European countries advanced themselves as Catholic and Protestant—thus Western *and thus* European and potential members of the EU. This is reflected in Milan Kundera’s much-read contribution to *The New York Review of Books*, ‘The Tragedy

of Central Europe' (1984). Likewise, former Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Bronislaw Geremek, in his *The Common Roots of Europe* (1996) sets out Western Christianity as a basic foundation of Europe.

p. 489 Debates on the mention of the Christian roots of Europe in the preamble of the planned constitution of the EU heightened attention to the relationship between ↵ religion and the EU (Leustean, 2013). They also entail a milestone in Orthodox–EU relations: Orthodox voices across Europe were actively engaged in this debate, largely prodded by a fear of 'spiritual pollution' (Ramet, 2006; see also Demacopoulos and Papanikolaou, 2013). Sabrina P. Ramet notes that almost immediately after Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's work on the Constitution for the EU was started in March 2002, tensions began to escalate between the Orthodox churches and the EU. The Russian Church issued a statement (7 October 2002) arguing that the EU's eastward enlargement 'should not be about the imposition of Western culture and lifestyle on the rest of Europe'. The statement also urged that each state should 'be able to legislate, with full autonomy, in education, family life, and ethics' (cited by Ramet, 2006: 163). As Ramet notes, this same fear is what has underpinned Orthodox resistance to ecumenism in general, and specifically to participation in the World Council of Churches (on anti-ecumenism see also Hovorun, 2018: 93, 178).

Indeed, there has been considerable Orthodox kickback regarding European limitations on the autonomy of states over religion-related matters (see Fokas, 2017). The relation of Orthodox countries to the EU, either as Member States or as aspiring Member States,<sup>4</sup> has necessarily sparked significant reconsideration of the privileging of Orthodox churches, not least wherever that privileging has underpinned violations of religious freedoms and the right to equal treatment (Demacopoulos and Papanikolaou, 2013; Cîrlan, 2019). And more generally, many countries' aspirations towards EU accession are essentially definitive of where 'Orthodoxy' stands in relation to 'Europe', seen through Orthodox reactions to certain EU-related proposed reforms.

A poignant example comes from Greece, the first majority Orthodox Member State of the EU (since 1981), regarding the 'crisis' in church–state relations which arose out of the Greek government's decision, in 2001, to abide by an EU protection of private data directive by removing reference to religion from the Greek national identity cards. Throughout this church–state struggle, 'Europe' was presented—in a notably haphazard way—as a key figure in the equation. Early on in the debate, the President of the Hellenic Data Protection Authority was reported as saying 'in Europe they laugh at our identity cards with religion on them'. For his part, Archbishop Christodoulos of Athens made the classic statement that 'Europe may fill our pockets, but it can empty our souls' (notably, he said this at a rally for maintaining the religion field on the identity cards, where the backdrop to the stage was a huge EU flag). The main opposition party also picked up the cue, voiced here by an opposition MP: 'the question is to what extent as a country we will maintain certain religious, social and national traditions that we have, or if we will surrender every time, without any resistance, to the powers of the European Union' (cited in Fotopoulou, 2000: 17). Meanwhile, the foreign and English-language press reported the issue with headlines such as 'Church Bashes Europe' (2000), and ↵ 'Greek Church Stirs Holy War Over ID Cards' (Smith, 2000). The *Observer* in particular noted that 'the Greek Orthodox Church is calling it a "wild war"', the Greek State a long overdue move to make all Hellenes "more European"—thus prompting the reporter's own question: 'Does Greece, the EU's only Orthodox nation, belong to the East or the West?' (Smith, 2000).

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Romania and Moldova also offer poignant examples of political tensions over EU-related reforms. In many cases this entails a tough balancing act by politicians (Stan and Turcescu, 2007). As Lucian Cîrlan notes regarding post-communist Romania, the political class has struggled to 'find the middle ground' between winning over its mostly Orthodox constituencies at the polls, establishing autonomy from all religious groups in the policy arena, and complying with equality and non-discrimination regulations imposed by the EU accession process (2019: 40). The Moldovan Orthodox Church resistance to EU equality legislation has been so focused as to yield what Romanița Iordache describes as a departure from the traditional *symphonia* between church and state (2019). Russia, meanwhile, is the case that proves the point: it is the most extreme



in the negative messages regarding Europe, the least politically liberal, and the majority Orthodox country with no EU aspirations. This point brings us to our third main caveat to generalizations regarding Orthodoxy's relation to Europe—differing conceptions of Europe depending on one's vantage point.

## Views from within and from without

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Much has been presented above regarding Orthodox negativity towards Europe. Here it is worth emphasizing the significant role played by certain political moments in history, including the break-up of Yugoslavia (and the media portrayal of Serbia in the context of the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo), the Cold War generally, and the early post-Communist ambivalences towards Western democratic liberalism (see especially Makrides and Uffelman, 2003). From Cyril Hovorun's perspective, expressed in a collection of essays tellingly entitled *Political Orthodoxies*, since at least the Fourth Crusade and the fall of Constantinople in 1204, 'Orthodox churches have developed a complex system of prejudices against the West', and in the centuries that followed, some of these prejudices contributed significantly to the shaping of Orthodox identity: 'In this identity, theology and geography were confiscated: Orthodox faith became interpreted in terms of Occidentalism—mistrust, even dehumanization, of the West' (2018: 96).

As suggested above, Russia has been a leading player in the production of negative Orthodox attitudes to the West generally and to Europe specifically (see Agadjanian and Rousselet, 2005). In Hovorun's words, 'This seemingly Orthodox state is believed by many Orthodox Christians worldwide to be a necessary counterweight to the Western world' (2018: 97; see also Stoeckl, 2016, 2017). Citing a Pew study, Hovorun indicates that Armenia (83 per cent) and Serbia (80 per cent) are among the top countries wherein populations hold fast to the notion that Russia represents Orthodoxy in a shared struggle against the West.

p. 491 So much for the relationship between Orthodoxy and Europe as generated from within Orthodoxy. Looking at the relationship between Orthodoxy and Europe 'from without', here too the same list of political-historical factors serve to frame Western conceptions of Orthodoxy. Elizabeth Prodromou notes a tendency whereby 'Orthodoxy is identified with authoritarianism, reactionary and conservative nationalism, and in general, all political and cultural tendencies incompatible with modern, Western, pluralist democracy [and in which the Church] is viewed as the institutional repository and promoter of traits incompatible with Western civilization' (Prodromou, 1996: 131). This tendency of Western European countries to emphasize Orthodoxy's religious and cultural distinctiveness from Europe has been incited by such factors as support of Belgrade during the Bosnian War, the failure to utilize effectively structural adjustment funds from the EU, and its slighted voice in the Aegean crisis with Turkey (Prodromou, 1996: 129)—all notably lacking in religious bases and explicable in terms of political policy or weak infrastructure and administration. Still, a current which regards what is Orthodox, Byzantine, and Eastern as irrevocably separate, inferior, and antagonistic to the West persists, and so perpetuates the either/or dilemma historically felt by Orthodox countries and imposed on them from the West.

Many such generalizations around the political implications of Orthodoxy are focused on Greece, specifically because of its near 'exceptional' position as a majority Orthodox country that did not experience communism and was alone in this religious category as a member of the EU from 1981 until 2004 when Cyprus joined, and 2007 when Bulgaria and Romania joined. Keith Legg and John Roberts' *Modern Greece: A Civilisation on the Periphery*, puts forth the thesis that geography and culture have been and will continue to be central determinants of the Greek political, economic, and social development, and especially in the context of the EU: 'Greece's economic and political institutions are unlikely to adapt successfully to the demands of full participation' (1997: 2; see also Robert Kaplan's popular book *Balkan Ghosts*, 1994). For his part Samuel Huntington dubbed Greece an 'anomaly, the Orthodox outsider in Western organizations'

(1996: 163). The conclusion reached in such texts is that the nation's geography and culture put into question the country's classification as European.

Statements made by prominent political figures and media sources resonate with these ideas. According to then Vice Chancellor Erhard Busek of Austria, 'the WEU does not well understand the Orthodox portions of Europe' (quoted in Prodromou, 1996: 126). George Kennan suggested that

the roots [of the current Balkan problem] ... reach back, clearly, not only into the centuries of Turkish domination but also into the Byzantine penetration of the Balkans even before that time ... thrusting into the southeastern reaches of the European continent a salient of non-European civilization that has continued to the present day to preserve many of its non-European characteristics (quoted in Prodromou, 1996: 126, 127).

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Media approaches have often reflected such generalizations, as for example a *Le Monde* article entitled 'In the Orthodox World, Religion Sacralises the Nation, and ↳ the Nation Protects the Religion' (Dhombres, 1998). And, according to a writer for *The Spectator*, Greece, 'from being one of us since the [Cold] War, has become one of them [the Balkans]. With the collapse of the Soviet Empire in eastern and Central Europe, Greece's usefulness [to the Western Alliance] ... has disappeared' (quoted in Prodromou, 1996: 130). Former Secretary General of NATO Willy Claes echoed the same attitude: 'the events of recent years have demonstrated that human nature is profoundly influenced by the historical, cultural and social environment, whether it is short-lived, like the years of communism, or long-lasting, like the division of Europe into Latin and Byzantine worlds' (cited by Carras, 1994). Thus, from a range of academic and political perspectives, Orthodox Christian countries have at times been deemed un-European, un-Western, relegated to a civilizational camp different from that of its fellow members of the EU and the rest of the West.

But these external perspectives, too, are temporally defined, especially around the Cold War and its aftermath and the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Views of Orthodoxy from 'without', beyond such historical markers, have far less definition or resonance. Meanwhile, in recent years the 'Europe' to which Orthodoxy would refer in such external perceptions has undergone its own transformations.

## Conclusion

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This overview has travelled from Byzantium to Brussels in its consideration of Orthodoxy's relation to the many forms and conceptions of Europe that have prevailed over time. The notion of 'Europe' prevalent today is inextricably linked to the European unification project, a notion that has faced severe challenges in recent years which influence—among other things—the 'Europe' to which Orthodoxy is trying to relate. The European financial crisis has entailed one such challenge, as 'European solidarity'—for decades considered fundamental to conceptions of a unified Europe—seemed an empty concept as many EU Member States resisted the pressure to bail out fellow Member States. Orthodox Cyprus and even more so Greece were at the forefront of those requiring assistance. The refugee crisis in relation especially to the war in Syria has further shaken any semblance of a 'social Europe', as Member State after Member State defied European dictates and closed borders to refugees, squabbling over which country had or had not fulfilled its duty in this regard. This situation has cast a different light on a historically and politically divided Orthodoxy in its relation to a (relatively) newly divided Europe.

Finally, it should be noted that emphasis in this chapter is given to *tensions* between Eastern Orthodoxy and Europe, but this is only one part of a broader story that includes a positive dimension spanning each of the main themes addressed here. For example, the view of Europe and of the EU that one gleans from the Ecumenical Patriarchate is generally highly complementary; so too is that from the Orthodox populations

p. 493 living as religious minorities in many country contexts. In an address entitled 'Orthodox ↳ Tradition and European Identity', Orthodox Metropolitan Bishop John Zizioulas of Pergamon (2001) calls specifically on the Orthodox diasporas to contribute to the formation of a European identity. The picture can also be positive when viewed from the perspectives of relations with the EU, for example when Pope John Paul II and the Archbishop of Greece Christodoulos spoke jointly in 2001 regarding the role churches can play to keep the Christian roots of Europe intact. Further, the opening of several majority Orthodox Church offices in Brussels was accompanied by declarations regarding the positive contribution to be made by Orthodoxy to Europe. And just as the negative perceptions emanating at times from within and from outside Orthodox circles have fluctuated, so also have there been variations in the positive messages regarding a generalized 'Orthodoxy' in relation to a generalized 'Europe'. In short, given the situation of flux characterizing contemporary conceptions of Europe, it is unsurprising that the relationship of Orthodoxy to Europe is an ongoing story, resisting a definitive conclusion.

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# Notes

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- 1     Of course, the religious tradition in question is alternatively referred to without the geographic referent as ‘Christian Orthodoxy’.
- 2     Trends, that is, until the ‘new’ populism-based nationalisms that developed across Europe following the 2008 financial crisis and the influx of refugees post-2015. It remains to be seen whether the new or renewed expressions of nationalism in Western Europe and in the United States will lead—in due course—to a recasting of this particular East–West distinction between Orthodox and Western Christian majority countries in a new light.
- 3     The Orthodox churches *outside* Europe (in Africa, North America, etc.) have, of course, entirely different relations to Europe; these remain outside the scope of the present chapter.
- 4     Among majority Orthodox countries currently members of the EU are Bulgaria (2007), Cyprus (2004), Greece (1981), and Romania (2007). North Macedonia and Serbia are candidate countries (in the case of the latter, negotiations have started on a number of aspects of the accession process). Georgia has an Association Agreement with the EU, which entered into force in July 2016.



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### CHAPTER

## 28 Islam and Europe

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### Abstract

This chapter starts by critically analysing the most significant literature on the religiosity of Muslims in Europe. It then discusses two overlapping contexts which are key to explaining these forms of religiosity. On one hand, the global competition for Islamic orthodoxy, and on the other, the transformation of Islamic repertoires and institutions by European governments through the cumulative influence of securitization and secularism. The chapter argues that Islam is a topos activated at different moments in European history, from colonization to post-Second World War immigration. Post-9/11, growing pluralization and an emphasis on security have exacerbated an ‘us versus them’ mentality in which Muslims are definitely ‘them’.

**Keywords:** Muslims, Europe, Islamic orthodoxy, government, securitization, secularism

**Subject:** History of Religion, Religion

**Series:** Oxford Handbooks

FOR centuries, Muslim and European countries have engaged with one another through theological dialogues, diplomatic missions, political rivalries, and power struggles. This past however, has rarely influenced the perception of Islam and Muslims in Europe in the way that it has since the 1980s. Due in large part to globalization and migration, what was previously an engagement across national and cultural boundaries has become an internalized encounter within Europe itself. The debate is no longer one of distant and isolated communities, but rather one of endogenous, face-to-face cultural and religious interactions. Questions about the hijab in schools, freedom of expression in the wake of the Danish cartoon crisis and the Charlie Hebdo tragedy, and the role of sharia have come to the forefront of political concerns. The recurrent question has become the following: are Islamic religious principles compatible with liberal secular European values?

In the same period, the literature exploring the issues of Islam in Europe has grown exponentially. A substantial number of publications from fields as diverse as history, sociology, economics, and anthropology have emerged in an attempt to make sense of this ever-evolving and politically emotive debate. They address multiple subjects: continuity and change in the making of Muslim identities, the development of mosques and Muslim associations, the struggle to establish Muslim schools in the European context (Doomernik, 2008), and social responses to the establishment of Muslim institutions (Esch and Roovers, 1987; Waardenburg, 1991, 2001; Karagül, 1994; Rath, 1996, 2005, Sunier and Meyer, 1996). Others have focused on specific social or institutional aspects of Islam in Europe, such as issues of Muslim youth (Vertovec and Rogers, 1998), political participation (Shadid and van Koningsveld, 1996; Klausen, 2005), legal questions and secularism (Nielsen, 1979, 1987; Ferrari, 1996; Foblets, 1996; Borrás, Mernissi, and Babadji, 1998; Ferrari and Bradney, 2000; Cesari and McLoughlin, 2005; Rohe, 2007), conversion (Allievi, 1999), the hijab as a cultural and political phenomenon (Coppes, 1994), and the radicalization of Muslims (Coolsaet, 2008; Pargeter, 2008).

p. 498 Not surprisingly, the production of knowledge on Islam in Europe has been influenced by the political history of the receiving countries. Three main locations for Muslims in Europe can be identified: the countries with postcolonial migration such as France or the UK, the 'new' immigration countries such as Italy and Spain, and the historical lands of Muslims in Europe, where they are either minorities (Bulgaria, Russia) or constitute the majority (Albania and Bosnia).

In Western Europe, Muslims stand at the core of four major social and political issues which have shaped academic research: immigration, socio-economic integration, multiculturalism and, since 9/11, the war on terror. In other words, the production of knowledge on Islam has followed the integration cycles of Muslim immigrants in order to provide data that can implicitly or explicitly respond to political fears. Indeed in some countries, Germany for example, the state itself has become the major agent of the production of knowledge on Islam and Muslims. And even when the influence is not so direct, or the research is not sponsored by public institutions, it continues to address political questions. For example, is Islam compatible with democracy and secularism? And what are the causes of radicalization among Muslims in Europe?

In Eastern Europe, on the other hand, a rather different shift from religious to immigration studies can be observed. As in the West, ideological influences on research agendas are strong but manifest themselves differently. Due to the historical legacy of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans, Islam was included in religious studies or orientalism. During the communist era, however, 'legitimate' study domains were not connected to the sociological investigation of Islam since Muslim groups were treated as 'ethnic' minorities under the rubric of folklore. Therefore, Islam as a religion was studied in philosophy or history departments while the empirical reality of Muslims was documented under 'ethnic studies'. The influx of immigrants from Muslim countries into Eastern Europe has led to new fields of investigation on immigration, dominated primarily by political science and external research agencies funded by the European Union (EU) or other foreign countries. More generally a gap has emerged between studies on Islam and ethnic minorities on one hand, and studies on new immigrants on the other.

Interestingly, in both West and East, comparative research on the religiosity of Muslims across ethnic or immigrant backgrounds vis-à-vis other religious groups in Europe is not the most extensive component of this growing body of literature. In this respect, the sociology of religion, a specifically European social science, still remains marginal when it comes to Muslims and the production of data that are comparable to those that exist for Protestants, Catholics, or Jews. Conversely, ethnographies of Muslim communities in multiple localities have mushroomed, but do not provide a clear picture of general trends in terms of acculturation or the social practices of Muslims.

A key challenge for any research on Islam in Europe has been the thorny issue of defining Islam and the Islamic conception of religion. Beyond the expected obstacle of essentialism, the other main difficulty is the tendency to take Islam as a proxy for a variety of social, economic, and political issues ranging from immigration and education to international relations. For this reason, it is important to keep in mind that ‘Islam’ as an identifying force has entered the public discussion only in the last quarter of a century. Prior to that, there were, and still are, nationalist associations of Algerians, Pakistanis, Yemenis, Turks, Arabs, and so forth who were not necessarily defined by Islam. The fact ↪ that all of these identities, with their various locations and socio-economic and cultural profiles, have come to be broadly designated as ‘Muslim communities’ is a matter that requires deliberate attention and a willingness to look beyond assumptions of stable, tangible, and readily identifiable indices of Islam.

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A parallel issue concerns statistics. The exact number of Muslims per country is unknown, which leads to widely varying estimates according to the ideological agenda of who is counting. Broadly speaking the overall percentage of the Muslim population in Western Europe as a whole does not exceed 5.5 per cent of the total population. It differs, however, from country to country with France (9.4 per cent) and Germany (6.6 per cent) among the highest proportions. A second point is also important. The share of Muslims in the European population will continue to grow with estimates of up to 9 per cent overall by 2050, but with considerable variation across countries. More detail can be found in Table 28.1; the need for care in interpreting these data is covered in the following section.

The changes in the definition of a Muslim and of what constitutes a Muslim community are the result of major changes in European societies in the recent past. On the one hand, there has been a shift in the way in which Muslims, or rather specific persons and collectives of Muslim extraction, organize and view themselves. But there has also been a shift in the social perception of Muslims by Europeans in view of increased terrorism and the succession of dramatic events such as the Rushdie affair (1988 onwards), the assassination of Theo van Gogh (2004), and the Danish cartoon crisis (2005). It is therefore crucial to avoid using or perceiving Islam as a primary unifying signifier that can only serve as a stark contrast to the ‘West’.

This chapter focuses on Islam in Western Europe and covers several issues. First, the most significant literature on Muslim religiosity is examined. Some counterintuitive findings will be highlighted such as the non-conflictual dimension of Islamic and civic identities. Second, the two overlapping contexts which are key to explaining the religious situation of Islam and Muslims will be engaged. On the one hand, the global competition for Islamic orthodoxy is raging as attested by the Saudi/wahabi global soft power. On the other hand, European governments play a role in the transformation of Islamic repertoires and institutions through the cumulative influence of securitization policies and the regulation of secular cultures.

## Who and what is a Muslim in Europe?

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As is the case for all other religious groups, the religiosity of Muslims runs the gamut of a vast range of beliefs and practices. At one end of this continuum are those who demonstrate a complete indifference to Islam, or even abandon it. Indeed, incipient movements of ‘former Muslims’ have emerged in Germany and France. At the other end are Muslims who strictly abide by Islamic precepts, from dress code to dietary rules to gender relations. In between these two extremes, lies the vast majority, comprising ↪

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minimally believing and/or minimally practising, pious Muslims unconcerned with public affairs, culturally sentimental Muslims, or persons who have become ‘defensively’ Muslim, and many more. These various manifestations of Islam are correlated with generation, gender, education, class, and other social indicators.

**Table 28.1** Muslims in Western Europe, 1900–2050.

	1900		1970		2000		1900–2000	2020		2000–20	2050 (projection)	
	Muslims	%	Muslims	%	Muslims	%	% p.a.	Muslims	%	% p.a.	Muslims	%
Austria	0	0.0	18,000	0.2	337,000	4.2	10.99	650,000	7.4	3.33	970,000	10.9
Belgium	0	0.0	120,000	1.2	501,000	4.9	11.43	980,000	8.4	3.41	1,800,000	14.4
Bulgaria	643,000	17.2	934,000	11.0	966,000	12.1	0.41	950,000	13.7	-0.09	700,000	12.9
Croatia	0	0.0	70,000	1.6	79,100	1.8	9.39	80,000	1.9	0.06	72,000	2.1
Cyprus	51,300	21.6	133,000	21.7	218,000	23.1	1.46	280,000	23.2	1.26	320,000	23.1
Czech Republic	0	0.0	200	0.0	1,300	0.0	4.99	20,000	0.2	14.61	80,000	0.8
Denmark	0	0.0	12,000	0.2	164,000	3.1	10.19	320,000	5.5	3.39	600,000	9.5
Estonia	500	0.1	10,000	0.7	3,900	0.3	2.07	3,700	0.3	-0.22	3,700	0.3
Finland	0	0.0	920	0.0	18,100	0.3	7.79	170,000	3.0	11.84	550,000	9.4

France	50,000	0.1	1,353,000	2.7	4,965,000	8.3	4.71	6,200,000	9.4	1.12	9,500,000	13.5
Germany	0	0.0	450,000	0.6	3,714,000	4.6	13.68	5,450,000	6.6	1.94	8,200,000	10.3
Greece	390,000	12.8	130,000	1.5	514,000	4.6	0.28	665,000	6.0	1.29	750,000	7.5
Hungary	0	0.0	2,000	0.0	24,100	0.2	8.10	38,000	0.4	2.30	90,000	1.1
Ireland	0	0.0	300	0.0	24,500	0.6	8.12	80,000	1.6	6.09	1,50,000	2.6
Italy	1,000	0.0	43,000	0.1	1,318,000	2.3	7.45	3,500,000	5.9	5.00	6,000,000	10.9
Latvia	0	0.0	5,000	0.2	6,000	0.3	6.61	5,800	0.3	-0.19	9,000	0.6
Lithuania	0	0.0	6,000	0.2	4,200	0.1	6.24	3,000	0.1	-1.71	9,000	0.4
Luxembourg	80	0.0	500	0.1	7,900	1.8	4.70	20,000	3.3	4.77	50,000	6.3
Malta	0	0.0	0	0.0	1,200	0.3	4.86	10,000	2.3	11.40	30,000	7.2
Netherlands	200	0.0	60,000	0.5	901,000	5.7	8.78	1,250,000	7.3	1.65	2,000,000	11.4

Norway	0	0.0	4,000	0.1	80,200	1.8	9.41	340,000	6.2	7.49	800,000	11.8
Poland	500	0.0	100	0.0	31,600	0.1	4.23	40,000	0.1	1.18	70,000	0.2
Portugal	0	0.0	800	0.0	43,800	0.4	8.75	52,500	0.5	0.91	120,000	1.3
Romania	91,000	0.8	250,000	1.2	92,800	0.4	0.02	88,200	0.5	-0.25	95,000	0.6
Slovakia	0	0.0	500	0.0	520	0.0	4.03	600	0.0	0.74	1,000	0.0
Slovenia	0	0.0	1,000	0.1	48,200	2.4	8.85	83,000	4.0	2.76	95,000	4.9
Spain	1,900	0.0	13,800	0.0	772,000	1.9	6.17	1,450,000	3.1	3.20	2,500,000	5.6
Sweden	0	0.0	2,500	0.0	364,000	4.1	11.07	900,000	8.9	4.63	1,750,000	15.1
Switzerland	400	0.0	16,400	0.3	321,000	4.5	6.92	560,000	6.5	2.83	980,000	9.9
United Kingdom	0	0.0	635,000	1.1	2,101,000	3.6	13.04	4,620,000	6.9	4.02	8,250,000	10.9
<b>Total</b>	1,229,000	0.4	4,272,000	0.9	17,624,000	3.5	2.70	28,810,000	5.5	2.49	46,545,000	9.0

Source: Todd M. Johnson and Brian J. Grim, eds., *World Religion Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed October 2020). The editors are grateful to Gina Zurlo for creating this table and for permission to use it in this chapter.

Note: Western Europe is defined here as the twenty-seven countries of the European Union plus Norway, Switzerland, and the UK. Information about Muslims in the remaining countries of Europe can be found in Appendix Table 2, pp. 795–7.

Most of the quantitative surveys on Muslims in Europe have yet to reflect either this diversity or this complexity. In fact, they contain two major flaws. The first is that they are based on a sampling divide between Muslims and 'non-Muslims', which creates a serious bias since they cannot really measure whether Muslims are more religious than other religious groups. The second is their limited battery of questions which revolve around the self-identification of levels of religiosity, frequency of prayer, and mosque attendance.

Responses to surveys such as Gallup (2009) and Pew (Pew Research Center, 2006, 2017), suggest that Muslims identify almost equally with their country of residence and their religion, with religion scoring slightly higher. 'Non-Muslims', in comparison, displayed a lower identification with religion and sometimes lower or similar identification with their country. The Pew survey also suggests that non-Muslims across Europe perceive Islamic identity to be on the rise in contrast to their Muslim counterparts, who believe the opposite. The only exception to this trend was the United Kingdom, where more Muslims than non-Muslims consider Islamic identity to be increasing.

There is a need for caution with these results, however, since self-declarations cannot be decisive measures of religiosity in the sense that they are not automatically representative of significant religious practice. Rather they measure Muslims' perceptions of the social desirability of religion. The multiple and conflicting meanings of these declarations when taken out of their social contexts impinge on their credibility. In short, quantitative surveys cannot account for the fluidity of identification and, more specifically, the tensions that might exist between personal and social identities.

In this respect, sociology and anthropology have highlighted the increasing disjunction between believing, behaving, and belonging among followers of all denominations. Sociological analyses have shed light on the disjunction of the three Bs in contemporary forms of religiosity (Davie, 1994, 2003; Hervieu-Léger, 2003). Thus, a person can believe without automatically behaving and belonging; can belong without believing or behaving; or can behave without believing or belonging. For example, surveys have shown that many Christians maintain private, individual religious beliefs but do not practise on a regular basis (believing without behaving), or in some cases, Christian identity has taken on cultural rather than spiritual meanings.

In the case of Islam, qualitative research has also highlighted the disconnection of these three dimensions of religiosity. It suggests that belief is generally not questioned among Muslims. Belief in God is a strong component of personal identity, as well as personal connection with God. The content and truthfulness of the Islamic creed is generally not discussed, and debates over belief are rare—a finding which converges with statistical work that repeatedly highlights the belief gap between Muslims and non-Muslims. Multiple monographs indicate that Muslims in Europe consider Islam's values to be universal, meaning that Islam is compatible with other religions and cultures in the society in which they live. Rather than systematically expressing fears about Muslim identities being threatened by European social contexts, respondents often perceive living in Europe as improving their spirituality. Such a view contrasts sharply with the dominant political rhetoric about Islam as a source of conflict among citizens. On the contrary, Muslim respondents go so far as to say that the synergy between religious and national identities strengthens their religious identity, as they rediscover their spirituality in the context of being a minority and experience a greater spirituality than they might have been the case in their country of origin (Cesari, 2013; Fadil, 2017).

With respect to behaving, however, similar numbers of monographs indicate that practices are often questioned as the central element of Muslimness, let alone whether someone is a good Muslim or not. Additionally, while some practices tend to be strongly adhered to, such as dietary rules, others, like prayer, may not be undertaken regularly. A suggested reason for this is that some practices, like dietary requirements, are engrained in cultural and social behaviour and do not require a theological justification, unlike prayer.



What makes Islamic practices distinctive and challenging for the believers are their social and cultural underpinnings and their reception in mainstream society. As a consequence, conflicts between personal and social identity often arise (Delhey and Newton, 2005). The hijab controversy is central to these tensions. The headscarf is considered positively by Muslim women even when they do not wear it, with data suggesting that, in contrast to popular opinion, women are more in support of the hijab than men. That does not mean, however, that those who do not wear it are considered ‘bad’ Muslims. Generally speaking, the hijab acts as a marker of collective identity which results, for some women, in an increased isolation from mainstream society (Cesari, 2013: 29–47). Similarly, belonging to Islam is strongly asserted, even in cases where individuals doubt or question their faith, or have no faith at all—thus Islam is established as a cultural marker. However, a clear line exists between ‘being Muslim’ and being a ‘practising Muslim’, indicating that ‘being Muslim’ is an identity lacking a clear relation to a set of legitimate or orthodox practices.

An individual’s identification with Islam can conflict with social identities based on national, ethnic, or social communities. Qualitative research suggests, for example, that for those with immigrant backgrounds, country of origin and heritage play a more significant part in self-identification than religion, especially when individuals might feel excluded from the dominant national identity. Focus groups in Germany for example, found identification with ethnicity to be more prevalent than identification with Islam because participants did not ‘feel’ German. More investigation is needed on the interplay between national, ethnic, Islamic, and social factors. Qualitative research has also demonstrated that tendencies and reasons for identifying with Islam vary depending on geographical location and factors such as personal relationships, or employment (Cesari, 2013).

p. 504 Overall tensions between different belongings, such as to the national community, ethnic group, religious affiliation, and social status, are critical. Identities are the outcome of the inter-related and continuing processes of identity embracement and ↴ identity distancing, as Muslims establish Islam as a marker of personal identity while simultaneously expressing ambivalence and resistance towards Islam as a social marker, especially when the latter is imposed on them by the ‘non-Muslim’ dominant environment. Additionally, despite the intense debate on Islam as an impediment to civic engagement, it is not possible from the existing data to conclude that Islamic religiosity impinges on cultural or political integration. Indeed, data reveal that Islam is not per se the main factor in the building of Muslim social identities or in their political participation (see Ajala, 2010; Solomos, 2012; Karim and Eid, 2014). Other elements—ethnicity, class, and residential distribution—have an effect that requires further investigation. The influence of gender on practice also needs more research, given that women tend to practise, think, and read about religion more than their male counterparts, just as they adhere more to dietary restrictions. By and large, they are also more conservative on social issues, such as homosexuality, and indeed sexuality in general (Brouard and Tiberj, 2011).

Inevitably, these forms of religiosity continue to evolve under the influence of the factors analysed below, the first being the global Islamic environment in which they unfold.

## Global Muslim doxa

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Islam in Europe is a site of contestation and competition between different international and transnational actors, ranging from countries of origin to global Islamic movements. It is worth underlining that a new generation of endogenous religious authorities has emerged, which are tailoring interpretations of Islam to the different cultural and national conditions of Muslims in Europe (Hashas and de Ruiter, 2014).

Nevertheless, the ease of communication and the continual circulation of ideas have granted major influence to a series of globalized authority figures who have an audience beyond their places of origin. In this respect, the *ummah* as the global community of Muslim believers is all the more effective, and especially so given the waning of nationalist ideologies. The religious promoters of this global *ummah* can be called pan-Islamists even though the restoration of the caliphate is no longer a priority for most of them. Not all these movements are reactionary or defensive. For this reason, a distinction must be drawn between the Wahhabi/Salafi and Tablighi movements on one hand, and the Muslim Brotherhood on the other. While both dominate global interpretations of Islam, they have very different positions regarding modernity.

p. 505 A wealth of studies have been dedicated to the religious influence of the Muslim Brothers in Europe and their engagement in favour of the political and civic participation of Muslims in mainstream society. The religious interpretation of these groups is influenced by Cheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi (1926–), who became globally recognized with his show on Al Jazeera called *Al Sharia wal Hayat* [*Sharia and Life*], which has aired since the 1990s (Marechal, 2008; Vidino, 2010). There are also religious authorities related to Muslim countries (Morocco, Algeria, and Turkey) who propagate their respective national interpretations of Islam. Finally, there is a proliferation of independent authorities: from scholars (Tariq Ramadan, Professor of Islamic Studies at Oxford University) to social activists (Hamza Yusuf, Director of the Zeytuna Institute in San Francisco).<sup>1</sup>

All of these are in fierce competition with the Wahhabism/Salafi movement that has gained a global influence across Muslim majorities and minorities. The movement is the subject of heated debate among both Muslims and non-Muslims about its legitimacy and its possible links to terrorism (Amghar, 2011). Interestingly, it is this movement that, in the eyes of Western political actors and public opinion, illustrates the true Islam. This indirect and Western endorsement, moreover, has the unexpected consequence of reinforcing the claim of their religious leaders to the monopoly of religious truth.

Wahhabism is a specific interpretation of the Islamic tradition that emerged in the eighteenth century in the Arabian Peninsula with the teachings of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–92). His literalist interpretations of the Qur'an became the official doctrine of the Saudi Kingdom upon its creation in 1932. Wahhabism is characterized by a rejection of critical approaches to the Islamic tradition. Mystical approaches and historical interpretations alike are held in contempt. Orthodox practice can be defined as a direct relation to the revealed text, with no recourse to the historical contributions of the various juridical schools (*madhab*). In this literalist interpretation of Islam, nothing must come between the believer and the text: customs, culture, and Sufism must all be done away with.

The heirs of this rigorist and puritanical line of thought, also known as Salafis, make up the existing Saudi religious establishment. Adherents of Wahhabism have rejected all cultural and political ideas that are deemed Western, maintaining a strictly revivalist agenda. They contend that the Qur'an and Hadith, when interpreted according to the precedents of the Pious Forefathers (al-salaf al-salih), offer the most superior form of guidance to Muslims. As a stringently revivalist movement, Wahhabism seeks the 'Islamization of societies', which entails formulating contemporary ways of life in relation to the conditions of seventh-century Arabia by 'returning to the sources' whose 'true meaning', Wahhabis argue, was lost over the centuries following Prophet Muhammad's death (Esposito, 1998: 117–18). In their resistance to European expansionism and globalization, Wahhabis have remained true to their literalist, anti-historical, and anti-traditionalist origins, and continue to uphold the Qur'an and Sunna as literal instruction manuals. In sum, the Wahhabi interpretation can be defined as a revivalist movement premised upon a return to the 'unadulterated' Islam of the Pious Forefathers.

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The most significant difference between the global Salafi Islam of today and the original Wahhabi period is a difference in audience: in other words, Salafi decisions and interpretations are no longer limited to the Saudi Kingdom but are now followed by Muslims around the world. The fatwas of Sheikh Abd al-Aziz ibn Baz (1912–99), <sup>1</sup> Grand Mufti of the Saudi Kingdom, and of Sheikh Muhammad Nasiruddin al-Albani (1914–9) are the shared points of reference for their followers in Europe and the USA, and more generally throughout the Muslim world. The movement has succeeded in imposing its beliefs not as one interpretation among many, but as the global orthodox doctrine of Sunni Islam.

The considerable financial resources of the Saudi state have certainly helped to create this situation of religious monopoly. In the 1970s, Saudi Arabia began investing internationally in a number of organizations that 'widely distributed Wahhabi literature in all the major languages of the world, gave out awards and grants, and provided funding for a massive network of publishers, schools, mosques, organizations, and individuals' (El Fadl, 2005: 73–4). Saudis also rely heavily on the media to promote and spread their message, through the creation of websites, or the airing of satellite television shows.

The visibility of Salafism, as the 'true' Islam, not only among Muslims but also in the eyes of the general population across Europe, reinforces the antipathy between the West and Islam. This incompatibility is often invoked in the political treatment of Islam. More specifically, Islam has become a component of 'governmentality' across Europe as exemplified both in security policies and in heated debates about secularism.<sup>2</sup>

## Securitization

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Political scientists pay attention to securitization through speech acts which justify 'illiberal' policies through exceptional security situations (Bigo, 2002). Other scholars prefer to analyse administrative and legal measures not directly related to terrorism, such as immigration policies and administrative procedures limiting Islamic practices. That is the view taken here.

Concerns for 'transnational Islamic terrorism' have led to increased security measures that affect *national* populations, thereby blurring the line between international and domestic policies. In other words, aspects of socio-political integration—including education, urban development, and economic integration—are increasingly interpreted through the lens of culture and Islam, while concerns about socio-economic development or social mobility are conflated with the war on terror and with Islam. Consequently, policies concerning immigration, citizenship, and the regulation of religion in the public sphere have become culturalized.

For example, since 9/11, measures have been taken by all European countries to restrict immigration by raising the requirements newcomers must meet. In the Netherlands, for example, the culturalization of immigration policies has been part of the government's overall goal to reduce immigration flows and asylum seekers (Penninx, 2005). The introduction of civic integration courses in 1998 was not controversial in itself, since testing the command of the language of the receiving country is quite standard. What was unusual was the cultural and religious content of these civic tests. For example, as part of the study material, applicants had to buy a video entitled, 'Coming to the Netherlands', which included images of gay men kissing and topless women lying on the beach. This video was controversial because of its assumption that in order to select immigrants compatible with liberal values, they had to be tested on their level of religious tolerance. The kind of gender relations depicted, moreover, were considered the opposite of Islamic values. Since 2007, new immigrants no longer have to attend a civic integration course but they still have to pass a civic integration exam to be eligible for a permanent residence permit. In the same vein, since 2004, the conditions for family reunification and formation are stricter. The age at which a person can apply to reunite with her or his partner has been raised from eighteen to twenty-one, while the partner residing in the Netherlands must earn 120 per cent of the legal minimum wage. An exception is made for spouses from the United States, Japan, Switzerland, Australia, and EU Member States. These exceptions are based on bilateral treaties, but they also reflect the fear that people from other countries are more likely to be economic immigrants who use marriage as a way to enter the country (Cesari, 2013: 88).

A further iteration of securitization, as expressed in France, deems certain religious practices, such as dress codes, to be incompatible with the acquisition of French nationality. For example, a thirty-two-year-old woman, married to a French national, arrived in the country in 2000. She spoke good French and her three children were born in the country. Because she wore a burqa and lived in 'total submission' to her husband and male relatives, according to reports by social services, she was denied French citizenship in 2008. 'She has adopted a radical practice of her religion, incompatible with essential values of the French community, particularly the principle of equality of the sexes', said the ruling of the Council of State (Chrisafis, 2008).

Besides the culturalization of immigration and citizenship laws, the perception of Muslims as the enemy has also affected the practice of Islam, from the circulation of imams to the teaching of Islam in schools and use of sharia (Cesari, 2013). For example, the wave of burqa bans, from France and Belgium in 2010 and 2011 to the Netherlands and Denmark in 2018, has for the most part been justified on security rather than secular grounds. A case in point was the 2016 attempt on beaches in Nice to ban the burkini, with officials stating that 'wearing [an] outfit ostentatiously showing religious beliefs may be interpreted as affiliation with religious fundamentalism', especially after the terrorist attack on Bastille Day of that year, which killed eighty-six people. The ban in Nice was subsequently overturned by French judges ruling that, 'the emotion and concerns arising from terrorist attacks, including those committed in Nice on July 14, are not sufficient to legally justify the contested ban'.<sup>3</sup>

In sum, the securitization of Islam is more than an emotionally powerful rhetoric. It is also implemented through a variety of policies, which are intended to mould the behaviour of Muslims in accordance with the 'liberal' values of European societies, and hence to make Islamic practices and groups compliant with 'right' governance. The same logic has led to the questioning of content and limits to religious freedom and religious practices in secular space.

## Secularism: religion in public space

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A significant obstacle to the legitimation of Islam in Europe entails precepts and attitudes towards religion overall. In this respect, secularism is not simply a concept but the sum of multiple ideological and cultural narratives that European countries have built to justify the separation of religion and politics. These narratives are founded on two political principles: the equality of all religions in public spaces and the political neutrality of the state vis-à-vis all religions. While they are implemented in different ways across Europe, these principles frame social expectations about religion: mainly the disjunction between private and public behaviours at the individual level and the separation of religion and politics at the institutional level. The accommodation of Muslims challenges both. In contradiction to the neutrality creed, European states have initiated the creation of representative bodies of Islam. And Islamic practices, such as the wearing of hijab, and even the presence of minarets on mosques, are seen as an infringement of the privatization of religion.

The differentiation of religion and politics typically takes three forms in Western Europe. In the case of the UK and Scandinavian countries, there is a state religion and other religious groups have rights extended to them. In Belgium, Spain, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands, formal agreements of cooperation between religious institutions and the state exist. France, conversely, is the only country that formally separates the state and religious institutions. Cooperation can be implemented through the state to provide for religious education in state schools, to grant religious organizations free access to public-owned media, and to fund (directly or indirectly) religious institutions. Usually this support is given on condition that the religious organization in question meets certain state requirements. Because of this, facilitating the cooperation between the state and Muslim groups has been a common concern among European governments and has led to the creation of Muslim representative bodies in Belgium, Spain, and France. For state agents, the goal of these bodies is to reduce the gap between Muslims and other religious groups when it comes to the legal status of Islam. They are also seen as a way to assuage feelings of discrimination that could potentially fuel Islamic radicalism and, it must be said, to ensure that the leadership of Muslim organizations falls into the hands of 'moderate Muslims' (Fetzer and Soper, 2005; Laurence, 2012). Interestingly, this institutional integration of Islam within the dominant framework of European secularism shows a willingness—even an eagerness, in some cases—on the part of major Muslim organizations to cooperate with the state. However, such 'good will' often passes unnoticed, and is therefore rarely presented in public debate as a positive sign of Muslim integration within secular cultures. At a deeper and even less explored level, the state has become an active agent in reshaping Islam by creating new Islamic institutions and representatives. The latter are state-appointed or bureaucratic leaders and often compete or conflict with leaders who derive their authority from other sources, such as scholarly expertise or the transnational networks depicted above.

Despite the differing legal definitions of the role of religion in society, a common feature of modern European societies is the political conviction that religion is or should be mostly a private matter.

### Perceived attacks on secular justifications

According to the principle of secular justification, only arguments based on secular reasoning are legitimate in political or public debates which have binding outcomes such as laws or administrative procedures (Audi, 1999: 89). Interestingly, very many of the recent crises related to Islam in public space can be interpreted as a rejection of Muslim positions that do not conform to this principle of secular justification.

For example, the Rushdie affair, which is usually represented as a multicultural conflict of minority rights versus individual rights (Modood, 2005), can also be read as the difficulty that Muslims have in complying with the principle of secular justification. In this sense, the condemnation of the *Satanic Verses*, and the push by some Muslims to have the book banned, highlighted their incapacity or unwillingness to accept the disjuncture between private convictions and public behaviours that characterize the ‘immanent frame’ described by Charles Taylor (2007). Additionally, unlike other religious groups that have adjusted to these constraints of the secular space, some Muslims have not yet built a strong ‘buffered self’ and are, therefore, unable to accept that individual rights and freedom of religion can operate independent of religious convictions.<sup>4</sup> It is worth pointing out, however, that the liberal definition of secular public space poses a burden on the shoulders of *all* religious citizens (Butler *et al.*, 2011), the main reason being that many citizens are not able to undertake an artificial division between their private convictions and public behaviour without destabilizing their existence as pious persons.

p. 510 That said—and according to many of the surveys discussed above—it seems that the vast majority of Muslims are already living their religion within the immanent framework. However, the problem is that some, specifically religious leaders, do not systematically communicate or express their opinions within this framework. This was evident when a Moroccan imam condemned homosexuality during a Dutch TV programme in 2001, and defined it as a ‘sin’ (Hekma, 2002: 237). His comment ignited public outcry against Muslims, who since then have been described in Dutch public discourses as homophobic and unable to live in a liberal society. In other words, tensions between Islamic claims and secular norms emerge when the convictions of believers or their spokespeople are not seen as compatible with the ‘immanent frame’.

If the Rushdie affair instigated public debate about freedom of speech, the cartoon crisis highlighted tensions between freedom of speech and religious freedom—two concepts that do not always line up in the European public sphere. When the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* printed twelve editorial cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad on 30 September 2005, many Muslims across Europe found the images not only distasteful but offensive, and demanded respect for the convictions of minority religions (BBC News, 2006).

Some religious leaders went a step further and argued that the cartoons constituted a blasphemous act. At the bequest of Ahmad Abu Laban, the leader of the Islamic Society in Denmark, Muslim diplomats in Denmark wrote a letter to the Danish Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, in October 2005, in which they stated that the ‘Danish press and public representatives should not be allowed to abuse Islam in the name of democracy, freedom of expression, and human rights’ (Marshall and Shea, 2011: 186). Rasmussen responded that ‘freedom of expression is the very foundation of Danish democracy’ and that describing the cartoons as blasphemous, and consequently liable under the law, was a process for the courts, not the Danish government (Marshall and Shea, 2011: 187). But even when Muslim leaders respected the principle of secular justification, their claim was not heard. Thus, the cartoon crisis sheds light on the hierarchy between the demands of different groups in public space: some are more acceptable than others.

## Fears of collective rights superseding individual rights

The recognition of Islamic law within existing legal systems, alongside the concern that specific subcultures can stifle individual rights, is a further example of the tension between political order and Muslim communities. The debate was set in motion in February 2008 by the declaration of the Church of England’s Archbishop of Canterbury which gave a cautious welcome to the inclusion of sharia principles within aspects of European legislation (BBC News, 2008). Like the term ‘Muslim’, ‘sharia’ has become a construct used in political debate to portray Islam as opposed to Western democratic principles. This construct operates on the historical and political decontextualization of sharia as a fixed medieval set of laws. It also projects the situation in some Muslim-majority countries onto Muslims in Europe.

p. 511 The concern about the intolerant use of sharia in some Muslim states is transferred to Europe without taking into account the completely different context in which references to sharia operate. Contrary to the widespread belief that Muslims seek the inclusion of sharia in the constitutions of European countries, most surveys show that they are quite satisfied with the secular nature of European political regimes. When Muslims agitate for change, they engage in politics and the democratic process, utilizing mainstream parties and institutions (Nyiri, 2007). This does not mean, however, that they renounce Islamic principles and legal rules as a guide or structure for their daily lives. And if the fear of hudud (Islamic criminal law) or Islamic constitutionalism is not well founded, the compatibility of sharia with secular civil law is nevertheless a legitimate concern.

It is within the changing framework of family law, and the growing importance of arbitration, that Islamic norms may find a place within European legal references. Additionally, the right to cultural identity, which is a part of European legislation (Cesari, 2010: 13), can be used to justify and promulgate the recognition of Islamic norms within legal frameworks. When Islamic norms contradict the basic principles of equality between individuals, clashes have surfaced in countries such as the UK, where arbitration procedures are permitted (Malik, 2010; Göle, 2013).

For example, the courts allow foreigners to apply their national laws (with the exception of the UK, where anti-polygamy law applies to nationals and foreigners alike). It means that in these cases, the judge applies the foreign law even if it is discriminatory.<sup>5</sup> However when the use of Islamic prescriptions within secular laws is raised by nationals with a Muslim background, the respect of equality and freedom is assessed on a case-by-case basis. While complete rejection of secular law is rare, complete acceptance of civil law is similarly unusual. This nuance is further complicated by the heightened securitization described above. Nevertheless, the general trend across Europe is the accommodation of some Islamic requirements within national laws. Such reconciliation has often been conducted in an indirect way through European legal decisions rather than Islamic legal experts or Muslim theologians. Consequently, a slow and 'invisible' form of personal Islamic law is being constructed and adapted to Western secular laws. Of course, European judges do not claim Islamic authority but the fact that most clerics do not contest their decisions—or sometimes even endorse them—illustrates the law's adaptation. It also reflects the malleability of sharia itself.

From time to time, however, confusions between legitimate religious claims and ethnic or cultural specificity arise. For example, in the 1990s, honour killings became a topic of public debate in the UK and led several Muslim clerics to publicly condemn such killings as non-Islamic. Cultural claims can also influence the judge's interpretation in ways detrimental to the principle of equality. For example, in 2007, a Muslim woman was denied a fast-track divorce in Germany on the basis of domestic violence because the judge reasoned that the Qur'an allows physical abuse against one's wife. Several politicians, legal experts, and Muslims leaders noted that they 'were confounded that a German judge would put seventh century Islamic religious teaching ahead of modern German law in deciding about a situation involving domestic violence' (Landler, 2007). Generally, in the case of European nationals with a Muslim background, negotiation is still the strategy of choice for most families. The recognition of individual freedom and the consideration of each party's best interests lead to compromises that change not only the letter, but also the spirit, of Islamic laws, stripping them of the official meanings they have in Muslim majority societies. One example of this transformation, in which Islamic regulations are 'acclimatized' to Western legal norms, concerns the acceptable period of time widowhood should last; traditional Islamic law specifying the time that must elapse before one is allowed to remarry cannot be strictly enforced in European societies.

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## Conclusion

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If historians of the twenty-second century were to understand the situation of European Muslims in the twenty-first, based on the mass of documents analysed in this chapter, they would probably learn more about the anxieties and imagined communities of Europeans than about what it meant to be Muslim.

It appears that Muslims have become both internal and external enemies. They are internal enemies because they seem to endanger the core liberal values of European societies, as well as adding a burden to social problems such as unemployment or the ghettoization of urban areas. They are also the external enemy because of the war on terror and the rise of violent Islamic activism. Under these conditions, any expression of Islamic identity or practice, from head coverings to dietary rules, is seen as a political act and therefore deemed illegitimate. This double process of estrangement and externalization from the national community has deeply influenced integration policies in Western Europe by questioning both citizenship acquisition and the recognition of cultural diversity. In the Eastern part of Europe, Muslim minorities were in some cases already built in as the 'other' or the internal enemies. Here the rise of external threats has reinforced the internal threat, leading countries like Greece or Russia to dichotomize between 'internal' historical Muslims and 'external' ones (immigrants from Muslim countries).

Even more disconcerting is the externalization of Islam, which puts the 'burden of proof' on Muslims only, by making symbolic integration a unilateral process of assimilation into European values with a strong emphasis on European secularism presented as a universal norm. It is also worth noting that European countries built their modern political identities in opposition to Islam. In the mirror of enlightened Western elites struggling for equality and democracy, the Ottoman Empire was always the 'other' (Rodinson, 2007).

In this sense, Islam is a topos that is continually activated at different moments in European history, from colonization to post-Second World War immigration. The post-9/11 era has introduced additional concerns about the pluralization of societies ↴ and security, thus not only resurrecting but exacerbating an 'us versus them' mentality where Muslims are definitely 'them'.



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## Notes

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- 1    For a typology of the different religious leaders operating in Europe and the USA, see Cesari, 2006.
- 2    Governmentality is a term forged by Michel Foucault to refer to political activities of control and discipline beyond state policies.
- 3    The Conseil d’État ordinance can be read in full here: <http://www.conseil-etat.fr/Decisions-Avis-Publications/Decisions/Selection-des-decisions-faisant-l-objet-d-une-communication-particuliere/CE-ordonnance-du-26-aout-2016-Ligue-des-droits-de-l-homme-et-autres-association-de-defense-des-droits-de-l-homme-collectif-contre-l-islamophobie-en-France>.
- 4    The buffered self refers to the barrier that citizens create to protect their personal values from the cultural and religious diversity of the public space (see Taylor, 2007).
- 5    It is worth noting that Islamic laws on marriage, divorce, and custody of children that are applied in the European context differ greatly according to the status of Islam in the legal system of the country of origin (see Vikør, 2005).

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### CHAPTER

## 29 Judaism and Europe

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### Abstract

It is not possible to make sense of Judaism today without understanding how it evolved in Europe. It was in Europe that the multiple options took shape for thinking about what Jewishness could mean once it became just one component among others in an individual's sense of self. At the same time, European Jewry has endured a long and painful journey as it tried to create confident accounts of how Jewish identity could be understood. This journey reflects a struggle faced right across Europe between accommodating difference and acknowledging the inherent limitations of tolerance. With this in mind, this chapter examines the different pathways that have been forged by Jews across Europe as they sought to construct proud interpretations of both Judaism and Jewishness. In so doing, key themes are explored: cultural Judaism, religious reform, assimilation, anti-Semitism, secularization, and Zionism.

**Keywords:** [European Judaism](#), [Jewish identity](#), [cultural Judaism](#), [religious reform](#), [assimilation](#), [secularization](#), [anti-Semitism](#), [tolerance](#), [Zionism](#)

**Subject:** [History of Religion](#), [Religion](#)

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IN modern times, Europe was the crucible that shaped the development of Judaism and Jewish life. Through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Europe was where most of the intellectual currents defining contemporary Judaism were initially forged. It was where Jews tried to navigate a path away from the pre-modern model that had defined the meaning of Jewish identity until that point. By the mid-nineteenth century it was also where most of the world's Jews lived, accounting for around 90 per cent of the global Jewish population. Thus, any attempt to make sense of contemporary forms of Judaism must accept the central importance of Europe in the development of modern Jewish life.

Notwithstanding this creativity, a second—and equally important—factor shaping the story of Judaism in Europe is the role played by persecution. Across the different lands that make up the European continent, there is a long history of discriminatory legislation, marginalization, forced conversion, and even attempted genocide against the Jews. Until today, the Jew as 'other' continues to linger as a recurring motif in European discourse. Debates about how to define anti-Semitism are ongoing. At a Jerusalem

commemoration in January 2020, marking the seventy-fifth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, the German President remarked that ‘sometimes it seems as though we understand the past better than the present. The spirits of evil are emerging in a new guise, presenting their anti-Semitic, racist, authoritarian thinking as ... a new solution to the problems of our age’ (Landau, Adaret, and Tibon, 2020).

On one level this indicates how the story of European Judaism examined in this chapter can be told in chronological terms. The development of theological innovation, and also non-religious, cultural, and nationalist interpretations of Jewishness, all happened in response to historical events—both positive and negative—that shaped the trajectory of European Jewry. On another level, by applying a more thematic lens, this chapter will also consider some of the underlying challenges related to questions of identity and belonging that defined the development of Judaism in Europe. Interestingly, these tell us as much about Europe as they do about the Jews.

p. 518 In modern times, Jews have often felt compelled to adapt and blend in, understanding that if they were to have any chance of being accepted into European society, they needed to conform to the changing mores of their host societies. For those who maintained some form of Jewish identity—and many chose apostasy instead—this either entailed reinterpreting Judaism and Jewishness, or hiding it away in a closet. By examining the struggle Jews faced in trying to forge an account of Jewish identity that enabled them to feel at home in Europe, this chapter also highlights some of the difficulties ‘Europe’ as a constructed entity has experienced in trying to accommodate its religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity. At the same time, it attempts to understand how European Jewry began to construct confident articulations of what Jewish identity could mean, thus examining how a route out of the closet might be discovered, so to speak. Gender offers an additional framework for analysis here. As will become clear, the journey undertaken by European Jews has tended to think about Judaism primarily in terms of the identities it ascribed to Jewish men.

The chapter starts with an historical overview of Jewish settlement in Europe. Records suggest there were Jews living in Rome as far back as the first century BCE; the focus here, however, is primarily directed towards the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Since this was the period in which many of the building blocks of modern Judaism developed, this is the timeframe that is critical to understanding Judaism today. The following section examines the divergence between East and West, keeping in mind that these divisions are not quite coterminous with those pertaining in Christian Europe. Legislative prescriptions shaped what opportunities became available to Jews in the modern period. When, for example, the break-up of the Catholic Kingdom of Poland led to many Jews coming under the rule of the Tsars in Orthodox Russia, they faced discrimination that marked out their experiences as distinctive from Jews in Western and Central Europe. Approaches to interpreting Jewish identity were informed by these different experiences. A recurring charge levelled at Jews across Europe is that their primary loyalty is to their fellow Jews; their ability to be patriotic citizens of the states they inhabit is consequently questioned. In the third section, a closer look at national differences focuses on British and French Jewry (currently the two largest Jewish communities in Europe), assessing some of the ways this challenge has been navigated, particularly in the context of Zionism. A final section examines how gender and social history can further broaden understandings of the Jewish experience. In the transformation of Jewish life in Europe in modern times, Jewish identity became just one component among many others in an individual’s sense of self. How did Jews interpret what this meant, and how was it possible to develop a confident account of the different interpretations of Judaism and Jewishness that are available to European Jews? This chapter attempts a response to these questions.

## Historical overview

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p. 519 The roots of a diaspora consciousness in Judaism date back to Babylonian times, when the destruction of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem, in 586 BCE, precipitated the Jews' exile from Judea. The earliest Jewish communities in Europe, based in Rome, consisted primarily of captives, economic migrants, and proselytes. The Roman conquest of Jerusalem, in 70 ce, led to a greater dispersal of Jews across Europe. Spreading across the Roman Empire, alongside settlements in modern-day Turkey, Greece, and Macedonia, by the fifth century important Jewish communities had begun to grow in Spain, France, and Germany (Goodman, 2019: 229ff). As a minority religious group, Jews were consistently subject to externally imposed legislation that determined where they could settle and what restrictions they faced. The severity of these restrictions varied considerably across time and place, occasionally creating conditions in which Jews could thrive but at other times leading to forced expulsions.

A division developed within European Jewry as Sephardi and Ashkenazi communities created separate liturgical traditions and distinctive customs, although in doctrinal terms they remained aligned. Sephardi Jews—from the Hebrew *Sepharad*, meaning Spain—are associated with communities that settled on the Iberian Peninsula. While their origins date back to the early fourth century, they were shaped in important ways by their years of settlement under Islamic rule. Particularly under the Umayyad dynasty, between the tenth and twelfth centuries, Jews experienced what has been, somewhat romantically, characterized as the 'Golden Age of Spain'. The reconquest of these lands by the Catholic monarchy of Ferdinand and Isabella destroyed these communities, with Jews being expelled by the end of the fifteenth century and subsequently dispersed. Ashkenazi Jews—from the Hebrew *Ashkenaz*, meaning Germany—are spread across Northern Europe incorporating smaller deviations in practice. As the name indicates, the term originally identified the distinctive customs associated with the medieval Jewish communities of Germany. While pockets of Jews were discovered in these lands from an earlier period, German Jewry grew from the tenth century onwards thanks to migrations from France and Italy. From there, some Jews continued their journey eastwards, settling in Poland, Lithuania, and Russia. The number of Jews in France began to swell in the eighth century. Jewish life in Britain was more haphazard. Although some Jews settled there after 1066, they were expelled in 1290, before returning in the mid-sixteenth century.

Across these lands, Christian rule frequently fostered anti-Jewish sentiments ensuring that the experience of tolerance was often limited (Ruether, 1997). It is this that made the influence of Enlightenment thought so important in the story of Jewish life in Europe. Through the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a series of debates and legislative innovations held out the prospect of finally improving the status of Jews in certain parts of Europe. From the Edict of Tolerance pronounced by Joseph II in 1782, to the French National Assembly debates between 1789 and 1806—alongside countless subsequent rulings in various German states that moved Jewish emancipation both forward and back—there was a growing sense that Jews could anticipate an end to discriminatory legislation (Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz, 1995: 36, 114–53). With this came the promise of considerable opportunity. In order to secure these new freedoms, however, Jews understood that the meaning of their Jewishness had to be re-evaluated if they were to respond positively to a radically changing context. Specifically, the growing influence of nation-states laid down a challenge to rabbinic authority, while Enlightenment thought elevated reason over religion and the universal over the particular. This was the context in which Jewish identity increasingly became a choice; in response, Jewishness was reinterpreted across a broad spectrum of religious ideas, and also in cultural, secular, or nationalist terms.

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For a long time, these reinterpretations seemed to be predicated on Jews undertaking a process of adaptation and acculturation in order to be accepted into European host societies. It was clear that Judaism and Jews were expected to fit into the categories of Western thought. Thus, the increasing rights that Jews acquired through the process of emancipation in Europe entailed associated costs. Instead of confidently



articulating a distinctively Jewish account of identity, Jews tried to blend in and conform. This process was demanding: despite a long history of settlement as a minority group in Europe, Jews struggled to model a path which balanced particularistic identities against the universalizing thrust of Enlightenment thought.

In the twentieth century, the attempted genocide of the Jewish people in the Shoah destroyed Jewish community life across much of Europe.<sup>1</sup> In 1939, despite mass emigration from Eastern Europe which had steadily increased from the 1880s onwards, some 60 per cent of world Jewry was still located in Europe. Currently, it represents less than 10 per cent. The 1940s triggered a radical transformation in Jewish life. Since the end of the Second World War, and the creation of Israel as a Jewish state in 1948, European Judaism, which previously had been the fulcrum of Jewish creativity, has been eclipsed. Two new centres of Jewish life, in Israel and North America, now account for around 85 per cent of world Jewry. They provide alternative spaces for expressing Jewish identity in ways that build upon a changing demographic reality. Both are inclined to view Europe in negative terms, as a site where Jews have been persecuted and from where they tried to escape. The growth of these new centres has encouraged the creative focus of contemporary Jewish life to move away from Europe.

In descending order, Jewish population estimates from 2018 suggest that Israel contains over 6.5 million Jews, while America has 5.7 million. French Jewry comes third in the list, but with a far smaller number: around 450,000 Jews. Next is Canada, with just under 400,000, and then Britain with 289,000. Argentina contains the largest Southern Hemisphere Jewish community, with 180,300 Jews. Russia and Germany follow with populations of 172,000 and 116,000, respectively. Rather smaller Jewish communities, ranging from 50 to 25,000, are present in Ukraine, Hungary, Netherlands, Belgium, and Italy (DellaPergola, 2019: 363).

p. 521 Despite the demographic revolution of world Jewry, it is not possible to make sense of Judaism today without understanding the story of how it evolved in Europe. This was where the multiple options took shape for thinking about how Judaism and Jewishness could be interpreted once pre-modern interpretations had been challenged. Moreover, <sup>1</sup> with over a million Jews still living in Europe, efforts at sustaining and renewing Jewish life indicate how new possibilities are emerging for articulating difference—keeping in mind that Jewish life continues to play out against a backdrop of anti-Semitism that has yet to go away. In short, European Jews persist in finding ways to give voice to very varied accounts of Jewish identity that try to look beyond the historical, theological, and sociocultural baggage that previously constrained such expressions.

## The divergence of East and West

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Beyond the distinctions that set apart Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews, there are a multitude of other differences. When focusing on how Judaism in Europe developed, one notable divergence is that between East and West. Historically, East European Jewry was the incubator of much of Haredi Orthodox Judaism. The term Haredi (pl. Haredim) comes from Isaiah 66:5, where Jews are exhorted to: ‘Hear the word of God, you who tremble [*haredim*] at the divine word.’ By pointing to an abiding sense of divine awe that guides the approach of its adherents to Jewish life, this term indicates how Haredim set themselves apart from all other Jews.

The Haredi label incorporates both Hasidic and Mitnagdic Jews. The latter term indicates opposition to Hasidism. Drawn from communities associated with the great Lithuanian *yeshivot*—talmudical academies—the Mitnagdim functioned as the bearers of rabbinic Judaism. Led by Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna (1720–1797), they vehemently opposed the initial development of Hasidism (Stern, 2013). As Jewish life became increasingly urbanized, the *yeshivot*, as bastions of religious learning, sought to offer a bulwark against change. Hasidism is linked with the teachings of Israel ben Eliezer (1698–1760), the *Ba’al Shem Tov*—

Master of the Good Name. It emerged in the eighteenth century, around the same time as other revivalist movements in Europe, as a pietistic movement challenging the religious establishment associated with the *yeshivot*. Drawing from Kabbalistic mystical Jewish teachings, Hasidism promotes a panentheistic understanding of the universe, teaching that all creation is contained within God. This encourages a focus on worldly acts, suggesting that actions performed with the right intention by humans on earth have the capacity to incite a cosmic response (Elior, 2006; Biale, 2018). These teachings differentiated Hasidism from other popular pietistic groups of the time, who tended to focus on asceticism; they also set them apart from the dominant Jewish model for religious life, which prioritized a more intellectualized approach emphasizing the central importance of yeshiva study.

p. 522 In Western Europe, specifically in nineteenth-century Germany, rabbis in the emerging Reform movement developed their own alternative model for Jewish life. Both innovative groups, Reform and Hasidism, posed a threat to the dominant structures of religious authority which emphasized textual study. However, the divisions between Hasidim and Mitnagdim began to reduce, and the two groups made greater efforts to coalesce, as their shared commitment to defending Jewish ritual slowly united them in a collective battle against the *Haskalah*—Jewish Enlightenment. Consequently, the label of Haredi Orthodoxy increasingly emphasizes what draws both groups of Orthodox Jews together, rather than the differences that set them apart.

The Jews of Eastern Europe faced a painfully slow battle for full civic rights. This resulted in the East European *Haskalah* developing in distinctive ways from the *Haskalah* that emerged in the West. To address the challenge of defending a sustained Jewish identity in the face of ongoing persecution and more limited opportunities for integration into the wider society, efforts were made to foster a cultural renewal of Jewish life in place of a focus on adapting religious approaches to Judaism. This contributed to the development of a rich Yiddish and Hebrew literary scene. In time, it also led to burgeoning support for both different forms of Zionist thought and revolutionary socialist movements, which developed as a challenge to restrictive Tsarist control. A wave of pogroms, which grew in intensity from the 1880s onwards, combined with broader economic factors to precipitate a vast migration westward of Jews from Eastern Europe. In 1880, around 75 per cent of world Jewry lived in Eastern Europe, mostly concentrated in small towns across Russia, Poland, and Lithuania, in the so-called Pale of Settlement. Western and Central Europe accounted for closer to 14 per cent of the worldwide Jewish population. Between 1881 and 1914 some 2,400,000 Jews emigrated from Eastern Europe. This transformed the Jewish communities that were left behind as well as those where the new immigrants settled (DellaPergola, 2011).

In certain respects, immigration strengthened transnational ties among Jews as multiple identities were transmitted across geographical borders. These were built from ingrained Jewish teachings on notions of peoplehood, which in time contributed to an emerging Jewish nationalism. Yet these currents, which threatened the anticipated acculturation of Jews to dominant European models of identity, were counterbalanced by efforts to construct strong patriotic identities linking Jews to the different states where they settled. Derek Penslar notes how many Jews signed up to fight in the First World War to demonstrate their patriotism and to battle against negative stereotypes portraying Jews as incapable or unwilling to fight. He also details how one of the paradoxes of modern anti-Semitism was that, no matter how Jews acted, they were unable to escape critique. Hence, building upon a range of inherent contradictions, Jews were simultaneously cast as inveterate outsiders who had nonetheless managed to infiltrate all elements of society (Penslar, 2001, 2013).

The Jews who remained in Eastern Europe were decimated by the Shoah, which utterly destroyed the great centres of Jewish life and learning. At the turn of the twentieth century, Jewish communities in commercial centres such as Warsaw and Lodz accounted for around 30 per cent of the population. After the Second World War, these settlements were all but wiped out. For the Jews who remained, subsequent Soviet legislation imposed further restrictions. In time, these challenged all attempts to maintain Jewish religious

life. In religious, cultural, and political terms, nineteenth-century Eastern European Jewry helped to shape the contours of modern Jewish life. By the time the Berlin Wall came down, it was in tatters.

p. 523 The fall of the Berlin Wall held out the promise of opportunities to restore Jewish life in locations where it had once been so vibrant, committed, and creative. The challenge is how to interpret Jewish identity in a context where its meanings had been trammelled. Zvi Gitelman notes how: 'For half a century until 1990 Jews were defined in East Central Europe more by boundaries than by content, and more by the perceptions of others rather than by their own sense of who they are' (2001: 39). Rebuilding is no easy task. Many of the efforts that have been undertaken have focused on fostering a cultural regeneration. The influence of decades of Soviet rule marginalized Judaism as a marker of *religious* identity. State-imposed restrictions on religious practice served to limit attachments to Jewish ritual resulting in ethnocultural factors playing a more significant role in constructions of identity (Graham, 2018).

Aside from Communism's role in fostering this areligious understanding of Judaism, an emphasis on the ethnocultural also reflects the trajectory of the Eastern European *Haskalah*. By contrast, in the West, *Haskalah* contributed to the development of religious reform, alongside efforts at cultural development. Encounters with the modernized and enlightened forms of religious Jewish expression that developed in the West—whether Orthodox or Reform—were far more limited in Eastern Europe. Consequently, during the period of mass migration from the East, sharp divides often developed between immigrant and established communities. In Western Europe, religious reforms were introduced to demonstrate that Judaism could adapt to its surroundings. Through modifications in worship services—improving decorum, reducing the liturgy, and introducing sermons and music—synagogues were made to conform more closely with churches, at least in their external appearance. Responding to the perceived need to make Judaism fit into the dominant Christian models of religion in Europe, rather than think about Judaism on its own terms, these reforms sought to demonstrate that Jewish identity could be approached merely as an alternative form of religious expression; it need not set Jews apart from their fellow Christians (Batnitzky, 2011). For many Eastern European immigrants, even when their attachments to religious expressions of Judaism were relatively weak, these innovations appeared alien. In this sense they give a flavour of the distinctive pressures experienced by Jews in the West.

The impetus towards religious reform, at least in the externals of worship, if not also in a broader rethinking about Jewish belief and ritual, helped to precipitate the splintering of Judaism in Western Europe into a variety of distinctive denominations. If the development of Haredi Orthodoxy is primarily associated with Eastern European Judaism, albeit with important Hungarian influences at play as well, Reform, Conservative, and Modern Orthodox Judaism all have their roots in the West. In particular, they grew from German Judaism, which was the intellectual incubator of so much modern Jewish thought until its later destruction.

p. 524 The first Reform Temple was established in Hamburg in 1818. By defining this as a temple, not a synagogue, the early reformers reinterpreted messianic teachings to indicate that religious hopes for a return to some alternative Promised Land had now been displaced; their commitment first and foremost was to the states offering them citizenship rights. Abraham Geiger (1810–74), a central figure in German Reform's <sup>1</sup> theological development, nurtured an understanding of Judaism that emphasized its ethical monotheism. This simultaneously sought to liberate Jews from a focus on the particularistic rituals of Judaism, amplifying its ethical teachings, while drawing attention to the shared values it had imparted to Christianity. Far from impeding full participation in nineteenth-century European society, Geiger hoped this could demonstrate the contribution Judaism had and could continue to make (Heschel, 1998).<sup>2</sup> By trying to make Judaism conform to contemporary sensibilities, Reform navigated the challenge of identity construction by emphasizing belief over behaviour. This entailed nurturing attachments to Judaism with a reduced role for the ritual practices that had previously been so central in sustaining Jewish identity.

Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–88), a fierce opponent of Reform, argued that demonstrating how Judaism can interact with the wider society should not come at the expense of understanding Jewish teachings from its own sources. Hirsch, whose theology helped to nurture Modern Orthodoxy, insisted that Judaism had to be embraced on its own terms. Jewish identity requires a sustained commitment to ritual, and study of its received traditions. Equally, within Jewish teachings, there is a willingness to extol the value of combining these practices with engagement in the wider society. Drawing from a saying in the *Mishnah*—part of the Oral Torah of Judaism—Hirsch championed the idea of *Torah im Derekh Eretz*—Torah combined with the ways of the land. On his reading, this enabled Jewish practice and belief to be maintained alongside opportunities for secular study, the pursuit of a livelihood, and also broader cultural engagement in the surrounding milieu. This could nurture a sense of belonging both to Jewish identity and wider society. Distinguishing between *halakhah*—Jewish law—as distinct from *minhag*—Jewish custom—he identified considerable scope for reform in some of the externals of religious practice. Through these innovations he hoped to offer an alternative either to Reform or apostasy, defending Orthodox interpretations of Jewish teachings. He eschewed Haredi efforts wholly to sequester Judaism from external influences. A central thrust of his argument was that it was unnecessary to impose such a segregation. One of the rationales he developed for defending particularistic Jewish practices was to emphasize how they could help Jews to fulfil a universalist mission, serving as a ‘light unto the nations’. Nonetheless, in practical terms, his battles to delegitimize Reform Judaism, claiming that only Orthodoxy offered an authentic interpretation of Jewish teachings, helped to create denominationalism in Judaism, establishing sharp divides between Orthodoxy and Reform (Liberles, 1985).

Completing the triumvirate of white Ashkenazi Jewish males who helped introduce denominationalism into modern Judaism, Zecharias Frankel (1801–75) developed a theology that in due course laid the foundations for Conservative Judaism. Frankel offered European Jews a third way in their efforts to develop a religious account of how to maintain Jewish identity while seeking to integrate. His ‘Positive Historical’ account of Judaism emphasized the continuous interplay between posited laws and the historical experiences of the Jewish community. He argued that this was how ritual observance and traditional beliefs could be balanced to facilitate a sense of belonging in the wider society alongside a maintained commitment to Judaism. By tapping into the ongoing tradition of Jewish interpretation, he argued that rituals could be adapted in order to sustain Jewish life. However, Conservative Judaism flowered rather more once it was transplanted to American soil. A distinctive set of political, historical, and social factors combined there, at least for a time, to provide a fertile ground for a religious approach that retained a role for ritual within limits (Sklare, 1955).

In Eastern Europe, Haredi Orthodoxy tried to shield its members from external influence to maintain religious standards. Although this was designed to defend pre-modern approaches to Judaism, it was predicated on innovation: turning away from Jewish teachings on peoplehood in favour of preserving a faithful remnant. It also relied on Jews becoming empowered to choose how to express their sense of Jewish identity. Building upon a delegitimization of alternative interpretations of Judaism—religious, cultural, or nationalist—it contributed to a growing denominationalism, leaving other Jews to forge their own paths. In contrast to Haredi approaches, the element that all Western European models for religious accounts of Judaism share, besides their male-framing, is a commitment to accommodate to modern European society—doing this in a variety of ways while retaining some form of attachment to Judaism. That said, both Eastern and Western models were shaped by their encounter with the shifting contours of European society and the pressure it placed on Jews to adapt. Consequently, they all entailed some form of creativity.

## Different national experiences

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In both geographic and cultural terms, Britain has often functioned as an outlier on the European continent. As the battles over Brexit highlight, Britain struggles to make sense of quite how it fits into Europe. The experiences of British Jewry are rather similar. Jewish emancipation in Britain was generally smoother than in continental Europe; persecution was more limited. British Jews felt less put-upon overtly to choose between acculturation versus Jewish particularism. The social historian, Bill Williams, nonetheless suggests that British Jews suffered from an ‘anti-Semitism of tolerance’ (1985). This indicates how Jews in Britain experienced a pressure to conform to some theoretical ideal. He argues that in responding to waves of Eastern European migrants in the late nineteenth century: ‘a Jewish leadership, powered by the imperatives of toleration, successfully undermined a rich immigrant culture, eradicated Yiddish in a single generation and pushed religion and socialism to the periphery of Jewish working-class life’ (Williams, 1985: 94).

p. 526 British Jewry grew exponentially around the turn of the twentieth century, from around 60,000 in 1880, to 300,000 by 1914. Eastern European migration also effected Jewish communities elsewhere in Central and Western Europe, but most of all it transformed North American Jewry, which grew from around 250,000 to over 4 million. The demographic changes altering Jewish life in the West heightened questions of identity; how were different accounts of Jewishness to be accommodated within the parameters of what host societies expected from their Jewish citizens?

By its nature, tolerance is predicated on dissent. It points to the possibility of accommodating alternative views but presumes that only one account is wholly true. As Avi Sagi (2009: 6) explains: ‘The idea of toleration was born in a culture that assumed an objective truth and a monopolistic perception of values ... toleration is not agreement but rather readiness to bear or suffer what is wrong, despite disagreement.’ Tolerance created the possibility for Jews to adapt and achieve some level of acceptance in society. Williams’ notion of the anti-Semitism of tolerance indicates how British Jews suffered minimal physical persecution for their differences. Elsewhere in Europe the limits of tolerance sometimes resulted in far greater suffering. Either way, tolerance constrains the nature of acceptance that can be achieved. In this sense, it promotes acculturation over particularism. Limiting how Jewish identity can be expressed, it encourages differences to be hidden away in a closet.

The increasing popularity of Zionism, as a nationalist interpretation of Judaism, provoked debate by challenging accounts of Jewishness built on the principle of toleration. Although the particulars of Jewish settlement in nations like Germany and France differed somewhat from Britain, the experience of British Jews was not wholly dissimilar from the situation elsewhere. For many Jews, driven by the perceived expectations of their host societies, it was important to demonstrate that Jewishness could be portrayed merely as a matter of individual conscience; it need not conflict with a chauvinistic patriotism to European nation-states. This meant that for some Jews the growth of Zionism represented a clear threat. It risked reigniting charges of dual loyalties that Jews had long been battling against.

The classic statement of the Count of Clermont-Tonnerre, in a late eighteenth-century French National Assembly debate on the eligibility of Jews for citizenship, clearly articulated the negative assumptions that Jews faced in trying to accommodate to European society. While arguing in favour of improving the status of Jews, the Count nonetheless insisted that: ‘Jews should be denied everything as a nation, but granted everything as individuals’ (Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz, 1995: 115; Hyman, 1998). At a subsequent gathering of an Assembly of Jewish Notables, convened at Napoleon’s behest to address French concerns about Jewish emancipation, these terms were willingly accepted. Drawing from a Talmudic teaching setting out the principle of *dina de’malkhuta dina*—the law of the kingdom is law—the Jewish Assembly affirmed its eagerness to accommodate to state legislation in order to secure citizenship rights and to facilitate a broader acceptance of Jews into French society (Mendes-Flohr and Reinhartz, 1995: 128–33).<sup>3</sup> During the

p. 527 course of the nineteenth century, there were marked differences in how the particulars of this debate played out for Jews across ↪ Europe. It was, however, the framework established in the French context, in terms of the challenges laid down to Jews and the acculturative nature of their response, that set the tone. Certainly, it informed how the lay leaders of British Jewry tried to navigate the difficulties associated with Zionism in the early twentieth century.

In its nascent form, Zionism grew from a positive assessment of the trajectory of Jewish history. The expectation that tolerance would encourage Jews to accommodate to European presuppositions undoubtedly had a negative impact on Jewish self-understanding. Yet by improving the status of the Jews, tolerance did create opportunities. Abigail Green suggests that a form of 'religious internationalism' developed among nineteenth-century Jews, fostering ties that crossed national boundaries to counterbalance the separation of Jews from one another that was developing in other respects (Green, 2010). An example of how this could play out came in 1840, when the Damascus Jewish community was charged with a classic blood libel, in which Jews were accused of murdering a Christian child in order to use his blood for ritual purposes. Certain leading Jews in Britain and France, responding to the charge, took the initiative to intervene on behalf of their fellow Jews. Using their newly acquired access to political influence and popular pressure, they helped to secure the release of Damascus Jewry. Zvi Hirsch Kalischer (1798–1874), laying the foundations for a type of religious Zionism, interpreted the success of this interventionist policy as a symbol of a dawning messianic age. Arguing that messianism could be viewed as a process, which required a divine–human partnership, he suggested that, instead of passively accepting exile as divine punishment, if Jews became more active in shaping their destiny they could hope to incite a divine response leading to messianic redemption (Ravitzky, 1996).

Kalischer's position indicated just one of the ways in which Jewish messianic beliefs were reinterpreted in modern times. Reform Judaism sought to repackage messianism in universalist terms. Eschewing any hopes for a return to Zion, they built Temples in Europe, not Jerusalem. The later development of political Zionism, as a broadly secular interpretation of how to achieve Jewish salvation, drew from a more negative assessment of the Jewish condition in Europe. Focusing on how Jews continued to be viewed as perennial outsiders—seemingly incapable of overcoming the charge of dual loyalties—political Zionism embraced populist nationalist currents in nineteenth-century Europe. By combining these with a secularized account of long-standing Jewish teachings on territory and salvation, Zionism created a distinctive form of Jewish nationalism. Multiple variants of Zionism subsequently flourished, offering different accounts of what set Jews apart as a people and how this could be utilized to sustain Jewish identity against both physical and cultural attack. What drew many of these positions together was a shared understanding that conforming to the requirements of tolerance was an unsuccessful strategy for maintaining a sense of Jewish belonging. A dominant trope in this Zionist discourse was to view Jewish identity in terms that looked beyond religion (Herzberg, 1997).

p. 528 By fitting Judaism into the category of religion, as a matter of individual conscience, the hope had been that Jewish identity could be portrayed as just a single component ↪ in an individual's sense of self. It need not impinge on commitment to the nation state. This entailed acculturating Jewish identity to fit in with what could be tolerated by the host society, rather than emphasizing Jewish particularity. Zionism highlighted the limitations in this account of Jewishness. Many Jews were keen to avoid Jewish identity impinging on their ability to achieve some level of acceptance and integration into European society, with the opportunity this promised. Following the Second World War, two key factors began to effect change. First, the creation of a Jewish state in Israel in 1948, in the aftermath of the Shoah, precipitated an altered approach to Jewish nationalism. There was a growing sense that Jews needed their own state in order to secure some form of self-defence.<sup>4</sup> Second, notions of tolerance came to be rethought. In Britain, this formed part of a broader recalibration of post-imperialism. This was given added impetus by waves of non-Jewish migration from former British colonies in the Caribbean and Indian subcontinent. Notwithstanding the earlier battles over

Jewish identity construction, this encouraged British Jews to develop a distinctive and proud sense of Jewishness (Gidley and Kahn-Harris, 2010; Kushner, 2012).

If British Jews rode on the coat tails of other minority groups in attempting to address the challenges of tolerance versus pluralism—and the later questions that developed regarding multiculturalism—this also reflects the experience of Jews elsewhere in Europe. What is striking in these various experiences is that Jews have been continuously settled in different locations across Europe for more than 2,000 years, yet they still struggle to model pathways to a more confident articulation of identity. The Jewish demographer, Sergio DellaPergola, suggests they have faced ‘the inherent weakness of a landless and powerless minority vis-à-vis territorially based societies and their constituted powers’ (2011: 4). This limited the Jews’ willingness to challenge, rather than acculturate to, the often-chauvinistic models of identity fostered by the developing nation-states of modern Europe. On the one hand, Ashkenazi Jews often took advantage of their physical appearance of whiteness to adapt to host societies that offered opportunities to those who seemed to fit a white, generally Protestant, male stereotypical ideal. On the other, this could not wholly brush away conceptions of cultural difference that look beyond colour. Moreover, the impact on notions of Jewishness was considerable (Sicher, 2013).

p. 529 French Jewry was transformed during the 1950s and 1960s by the arrival of more than 200,000 North African Jewish immigrants from former French colonies. Settling primarily in Paris, they contributed to the rebuilding of Jewish life in France after the war; in time, this enabled French Jewry to become the largest Jewish community in Europe. The North African migrants formed distinctive Mizrahi communities outside the previously dominant white Ashkenazi mainstream. Mizrahi Jews have their own liturgical tradition, distinctive from both Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities. Their route to integration in Western societies was forged through a process of secularization within broadly Islamic contexts. These markedly different experiences shaped their approach to the challenges of acculturation. If Jews across Europe often struggled to develop particularist accounts of Jewish identity, in France, these rather different Jewish migrants helped to precipitate the growth of more confident expressions of difference tapping into wider societal shifts (Hyman, 1998: 193ff; Leon, 2008).

Contemporary German Jewry has also been altered by immigration, shaped by two key waves. In 1989 there were 33,500 Jews in Germany. In 2018, there were 116,000. The fall of the Berlin Wall brought floods of Jews into Germany. The other sizeable migration came from Israel. There is a distinctive challenge associated with translating articulations of Jewishness nurtured in a Jewish state on to foreign soil. Observing Jewish ritual in Israel is a very different proposition when, for example, accessing kosher food is the norm rather than the exception. The same applies to finding a Jewish partner. Survey data comparing Jews in Europe with Israel highlights how: ‘Israel is different. Compared with both Europe and the USA, its status as a Jewish state massively changes the dynamic interplay between ethno-religious and national identity’ (Graham, 2018: 21). Finding ways to express a sense of Jewishness can be more difficult in Europe compared to Israel. Equally, European efforts to nurture this Jewishness differ from the United States, highlighting how Judaism in Europe continues to represent something distinctive.

## Gender and social history

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The journey navigated by European Jewry has tended to perpetuate the androcentrism and patriarchal foundations that have long shaped Judaism. It was primarily rabbis and intellectuals, white Jewish males drawn from the seeding grounds of Ashkenazi Jewry, who formulated ideologically driven accounts of how to adapt and respond to changing cultural and political settings. This ensured that the efforts to adapt to European mores continued to think about Judaism primarily through a male lens.

There are increasing efforts to draw attention to influential female voices who also contributed to the moulding of modern Jewish life. These studies examine what it meant to be a Jewish woman, responding in distinctive ways to the experiences women faced in encountering the shifting intellectual, political, and sociocultural contexts that characterized the modern European experience. The list of such women include Sarah Schenirer (1883–1935) in Poland, the strictly Orthodox educational revolutionary who persuaded the rabbis to value religious education for Jewish girls; Lily Montagu (1873–1963) in Britain, who helped to found a movement for Liberal Judaism; and Regina Jonas (1902–44) in Germany, who was the first female rabbi to be ordained in 1935. By highlighting the role played by these women who sought to take an active role in thinking about Jewish identity in modern Europe, the focus continues to be directed primarily towards intellectual responses. Through the work of social historians, some of the more practical and mundane ways in which Jewish women were able to effect a shift can also be identified (Hyman, 1995).

p. 530 Whatever analytical approach is adopted, this scholarship draws attention to the costs associated with the increasing rights Jews acquired through the process of emancipation in Europe. Modernization entailed various forms of secularization—although examples of different types of religious expression suggest that this process did not turn out quite as anticipated. It was also characterized by a process of urbanization, as push and pull factors combined to draw Jews into the rapidly expanding cities of Europe. Schenirer, Jonas, and Montagu were all city-dwellers, respectively based in Kraków, Berlin, and London. As Judaism became steadily more urban from the nineteenth century onwards, this transformed religious communities across Europe, along with the home lives that went with them.

The possibilities for thinking more creatively about Jewish identity were far greater away from the watchful eye of family and the religious oversight of smaller, more insular, and primarily rural leadership figures. Yet the yearning for acculturation and embourgeoisement that often characterized this migration raised a different set of challenges. Especially in Western Europe, as Jews tried to adapt to their host societies, certain shifts were imposed on the gender roles of both Jewish women and men. In some respects, this amplified the responsibility given to women to cultivate a sense of religiosity, shaping the spiritual parameters of the home. But this came at the expense of restricting women to the domestic sphere. The German ideal set women up as the ones to take charge of *Kinder, Küche, Kirche*—children, kitchen, and church (Kaplan, 1991). In a pre-modern context there was a certain fluidity in gender roles for Jews; women enjoyed some level of independence and were able to contribute financially to their households—as they continue to do in many contemporary Haredi Orthodox families where men are expected to focus on study. Paradoxically, new political freedoms often entailed greater restrictions on the expected functions of Jewish men and women. Enlightened critiques of Judaism in the nineteenth century sometimes recognized the limits religious laws imposed on women. Instead of this resulting in any type of liberation, however, it often led to alternative gender roles being imposed, bringing their own forms of restriction. In short, the new opportunities for citizenship that became available for Jews were experienced unevenly by Jewish men and women.

Daniel Boyarin has analysed the pressures exerted on Jewish men by European notions of gender (1997; Boyarin, Itzkowitz, and Pellegrini, 2003). The influences displacing Jewish constructions of gender formed part of the broader pattern already seen in other contexts, in which Judaism and Jews were expected to adapt in order to fit into the categories of Western thought. It was some time before patriarchal models of Jewish family life were subjected to critique. That said, the male prioritization of study over self-sufficiency, and the eschewal of violence to achieve power, did not conform to dominant gender norms. Consequently, the quest for acceptance often contributed to Jews feeling compelled either to reinterpret their Jewish identity, or hide it away.

As the caricatures of Nazi propaganda revealed, no matter what efforts Jewish men and women made, they were still portrayed as failing to adapt to the gender models promoted in the Third Reich; they were accused of representing effeminate forms of men, and controlling, overly sexualized versions of womanhood



p. 531 (Gilman, 1991). These struggles reflect the difficulties European Jewry experienced more generally in their efforts to accommodate to the changing mores of modern Europe, with its shifting notions of nationalist identity, and the expectations this placed on Jews. It explains why, more often than not, Jews had first to emerge from the closet, challenging externally imposed accounts of how Judaism should be understood, before they could construct positive accounts of what Jewishness might mean.

## Conclusion

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European Judaism was once the centre of Jewish life, dominating in intellectual and demographic terms. It has since been usurped by a new axis of power split between Israel and North America. These two new centres of Jewish life offer alternative models for constructing Jewish identity freed from the baggage associated with the European experience. For all the creativity to which European Judaism can lay claim, this reflects how it has also been devastated by persecution. The way Judaism was able to develop in modern Europe created the scope for thinking about Jewishness in terms that drew upon different religious, cultural, or nationalist interpretations. Yet this came with associated costs that threatened the development of proud accounts of Jewish identity. This chapter has focused on the long and sometimes painful journey European Jewry has had to travel in order to challenge externally imposed accounts of how Jewishness should be interpreted. This entailed looking beyond a choice between acculturation and particularism.

Countless Jews in nineteenth-century Europe embraced a process of secularization and acculturation desperate to fit into modern society. Viewing Judaism as the cause of their long-standing marginalization from European society, many—when the opportunity was offered—eagerly embraced the possibility of adapting the meanings of Jewish identity, hoping that this would facilitate a yearned-for integration into the host cultures where Jews lived. This failed to turn out as anticipated. Jewish efforts at negotiating the consequences of this failure point to an ongoing struggle—by both Jews and Europeans—to construct a sustainable path that balances the variety of components that make up contemporary notions of identity. In this sense, studying how Jews have tried to negotiate their place in European society, constructing models for Jewish identity that balance particularist difference with an effort to adapt and fit in, offers a prism for examining the story of how Europe itself has struggled to accommodate difference.

The Jewish experience of adapting to European life has differed across the various nations where Jews have settled. In certain respects, Jewishness implies some form of connection to a wider Jewish people that exists beyond geographic boundaries. At the same time, the disparate experiences of Jews within different states help to shape the particular understandings of Jewishness that are formed. In the modern development of European Judaism, Jews were called upon to rethink the meanings of Jewishness as it became increasingly a matter of choice. Belief, practice, and a sense of belonging had all been integrated as central features of the pre-modern experience of being Jewish. Jews understood that they were a covenanted people, who expressed their commitment to God through observance of the mitzvot detailed in the Torah. These tenets, however, became negotiable once Jews were able to choose how much, or how little, of their Judaism they wished to nurture and sustain. By separating Judaism into religious, cultural, secular, or nationalist components, the ties that joined Jews together were weakened; the same applied to the links connecting Jews with their Jewishness. The contemporary commitment to forging an ongoing European Jewish narrative fits within a framework in which the value of more particularist, and proud forms of Jewish identity are increasingly being reclaimed. The challenges, from within and without, remain nonetheless considerable.

p. 532

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## Notes

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- 1     The Hebrew term ‘Shoah’, denoting destruction, is often preferred to Holocaust since the latter implies some form of sacrificial offering, which runs the risk of imposing a particular interpretation of the attempted genocide of the Jewish people in the Second World War.
- 2     Heschel examines how Geiger was attacked for highlighting the Christian debt to Jewish teachings.
- 3     The Talmudic principle is debated at various times, see, for example, Nedarim 28a; Gittin 10b.
- 4     The ongoing conflict with Palestinians has complicated this position; see Graham and Boyd, 2010.

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### CHAPTER

## 30 Eastern Religions and Europe

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### Abstract

This chapter begins with the Orientalist constructions of Eastern religions from the mid-sixteenth to the late nineteenth century. Subsequently, in Colonial Times, Asian reformers campaigned for Hinduism and Buddhism in the West leading to the establishing of the first institutions in Europe around 1900. From the 1960s onward, Europe saw the arrival of Hindu gurus and Buddhist teachers, later followed by the immigration of Asian workers and refugees. The conclusion highlights key constructions and images of Eastern religions and points to the ongoing processes of secularization and commercialization which have repackaged practices and artefacts of Eastern religions for European preferences. The chapter argues that since the earliest encounters, Eastern religions represent both hope and promise for European philosophers, scholars, and practitioners. An awareness of the varied European imaginings enables a better understanding of the continuing fascination of Eastern religions on the part of sympathizers, practitioners, and the population in general.

**Keywords:** Orientalism, Asia, colonialism, Hinduism, Buddhism, immigration, secularization, commercialization, imagination

**Subject:** History of Religion, Religion

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By the early part of the twenty-first century, Eastern religions had been firmly established in Europe. A plurality of places of worship existed and a diversity of religious traditions and cultural representations were present. Despite the extent of this establishment, however, religions from Asian countries are still perceived, more often than not, through the prism of a European imagination, projection, and idealization. As early as the seventeenth century, the philosophies and ethics of Chinese and Indian religions captivated philosophers, poets, and literate people in different countries of Europe. Later, images of strange fakirs in India and restrained geishas in Japan inspired and amazed occidental people. At the same time, the Rajput custom of widow-burning repelled the more educated. In short, Asia and its customs and religions both fascinated and disgusted Europeans. One point is clear however: through such imaginings, from the early days to the current period, Asia and its religions figured as ‘the other’, the antipode of Europe.

The 'East' and 'Eastern religions' were categories invented in colonial times. Europe considered itself to be the 'middle' of the world and everything east of Europe was framed as the East. In Western construction, since roughly the late eighteenth century, the East became known as the Orient, thought to form a coherent entity with specific features and qualities. More than this, the East became the 'exotic Orient' and the 'mystic East' (King, 1999), a rich inspiration for British, French, German, and other scholars, philosophers, and poets in Europe. From the eighteenth until well into the twentieth century, the East and the Orient became an object of European scholarship and 'techniques of ordering', as well as a source of influence for the imagination and wishful thinking.

p. 535 Although the notion of Eastern religions relates back to colonial times and Europe's 'intellectual authority over the Orient' (Said, 1978: 19), it will be retained for convenience in this *Handbook*. And following the important volume *World Religions: Eastern Traditions* (Amore, Hussain, and Oxtoby, 1996), the notion of 'Eastern religions' will encompass the traditions of Hindu, Jain, Sikh, Buddhist, Confucian, Taoist, and Shinto believers. However, as ritual Confucianism, religious Taoism, and Japanese Shinto are hardly institutionalized with priestly services in European countries, they will not be dealt with in this chapter.

The chapter as such is chronologically arranged. The next section provides an overview of the early European constructions and images of Eastern religions. It is followed by a discussion of the colonial period, when Asian reformers and pioneer Western converts campaigned for Eastern religions in the West, leading to the establishment of the first religious institutions and associations in Europe around 1900. From the 1950s on Europe saw a burgeoning pluralism of Eastern religions, characterized by the arrival of Hindu gurus and Buddhist teachers, as well as the coming of Asian migrants and refugees. The conclusion highlights key constructions of Eastern religions and points to the ongoing processes of secularization and commercialization which have repackaged practices and artefacts of Eastern religions for European preferences.

The chapter argues that since their early encounters Eastern religions represent both hope and promise for European scholars, writers, and practitioners. An awareness of the very varied European imaginings and constructions of Eastern religions during the past four centuries enables a better understanding of the continuing fascination of Eastern religions on the part of sympathizers, practitioners, and ordinary people.

## **Orientalism: inventing Eastern religions and nudging Asian reform movements**

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Edward Said coined the term 'orientalism' to capture the East and its ascribed features as a European invention (Said, 1978). The Orient was made 'the Other' and was imagined and structured according to European projections and interests. Said limits his analysis of orientalizing the East to the Near East, Islam, and the Arabian territories. A decade later, Richard King employed Said's term to analyze Western constructions of South Asia and to criticize the 'textual bias within Western approaches to religion' (King, 1999: 5). It had been texts, in particular, that provided the means of knowledge about the distant East.

In the early modern period, Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries went to China and Japan with the intention of spreading the Roman Catholic faith to the Eastern pagans. From the mid-sixteenth century onwards, through the Jesuits' reports from Japan and China the first fragmented impressions about a false god named Bod reached European countries. In China, the Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), with his Eurocentric bias, interpreted the Buddhist doctrines of 'no-self' and 'impermanence' as denoting a nihilistic nature, bereft of any positive values. Based on these sources, the German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716), who was particularly interested in China, argued in his famous *Théodizée* (1710) that the teaching of this so far unknown Eastern faith was characterized by 'nothingness' as the first principle of all

p. 536 things. Leibniz's interpretation of the very nature of Buddhism influenced the understanding of subsequent  
↳ writers and poets, including Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900).

The writings of the Jesuits were widely disseminated among the European elite by the director of the Jesuit museum in Rome, Athanasius Kircher (1602–80), author of the influential *China Illustrata* (1667). From the late sixteenth to the late seventeenth century, a developed *chinoiserie* and Sinophilia praised China for its 'rational' social and political organization. The Jesuits who had introduced Western mathematics and astronomy to the Chinese court most certainly overemphasized the rational character of the classic Confucian texts, in line with the growing praise of rationality among European philosophers. Voltaire (1694–1778), Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, and others admired the supposedly practical philosophy of the Chinese, with the associated aim of indirectly criticizing existing conditions in Europe. However, after the rites controversy and the subsequent Papal Bull (1715),<sup>1</sup> Western perceptions of China started to change, characterizing the Qing dynasty as despotic, corrupt, and tyrannical (Millar, 2007). With the disdain of rationality by the Romantic Movement at the turn of the eighteenth century, the direction of interest and admiration shifted towards India as the supposed cradle of humankind.

The philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder, who paved the way to Romanticism, enthusiastically praised India as the oldest expression of humanity, and as pure and innocent. Travelogues, missionary reports, and translations of Sanskrit texts by William Jones (1746–94), Charles Wilkins (1749–1836), and Henry Thomas Colebrooke (1765–1837), published by the Asiatic Society of Bengal (founded in 1784), brought new and first-hand knowledge to educated Europeans. Philosophers and poets of Romanticism elevated India as the lost paradise of all religions and as host to the original and oldest religious traditions of mankind (Halbfass, 1981: 86–103; Schwab, 1984: 51–64). And similar to the praise of the rational character of China, the admiration of India served as a vehicle for criticism of the current situation and a call for the regeneration of Europe. Aspects of the Romantics' admiration of India and its religions continued up to the 1960s counterculture and its longing for Indian spirituality. Indeed, the Romantic motive persists to the present day.

The translation of Sanskrit texts into French, English, German, and later also into Swedish and Russian, opened a new world on Indian ideas and philosophy. The establishment of the first chairs of Sanskrit, with Antoine-Léonard de Chézy (1773–1832) in Paris in 1814 and August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767–1845) in Bonn in 1818, followed by further chairs, introduced the systematic study of this new subject. Schlegel's brother Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) considered Sanskrit and its texts to be of similar importance for their times as Greek literature was for the Renaissance in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. As earlier writers and  
p. 537 philosophers had taken inspiration from Greek ↳ studies, now they turned to Sanskrit texts to trace the attributed light of the Orient. The Oriental Renaissance, as numerous French and German writers termed their interest in the East, strove to rejuvenate Europe by new and unspoiled ideas from India. Texts and translations of, for example, the *Veda*, the *Upanishad*, and the *Bhagavad-Gītā* illustrated the advantages and disadvantages—of the growing knowledge about India and its religions. Rites, devotional practices, and the religiosity of common people were of no interest. Rather, the Brahmanical elite and prescriptive accounts in the Sanskrit scripts shaped the image and imagination for European philosophers, scholars, and poets (Schwab, 1984: 11–47; Lussier, 2011).

The German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer was a close follower of the newly appearing translations. He thought of himself less an interpreter of the Indian texts and more an original thinker. For him, the ideas of the texts were a confirmation and endorsement of his intuition. More than any other book of the time, his opus *The World as Will and Representation* (1819) stimulated a wide interest in Buddhist ethics and philosophy among academics, artists, and savants in German-speaking areas. Like the romantics, Schopenhauer perceived India as the land of the oldest and original wisdom and its inhabitants as the noblest people. European learning and thought would greatly benefit from the inflow of Indian wisdom, which itself would

provide a superior corrective to the one-sidedness of occidental tradition. Schopenhauer portrayed the Buddhist teachings of *nirvāṇa* as negativity and pessimism. This interpretation was followed by Eugène Burnouf (1801–52) and turned by Friedrich Nietzsche into world denial and nihilism. Notably, this understanding coined new ideas about Buddhism in the nineteenth and into the twentieth century (Halbfass, 1981: 122–36).

Eugène Burnouf was the successor of de Chézy as holder of the important Sanskrit chair in Paris. More than any other, Burnouf was the first to propound the systematization of the history and teachings of Indian Buddhist traditions. He ordered, in a rational way, Buddhist developments and ideas which previously were thought to be independent from each other. New academic journals and ongoing translations of Sanskrit, Pāli, and Tibetan texts, followed by Prakrit texts of the Jains, paved the way for an enhanced knowledge of the Indian religious traditions. Early nineteenth-century European inventions of the new notions of Hinduism and Buddhism, followed in 1879 by the term Jainism, led terminologically to seeing as singular what in effect were very diverse traditions, schools, and religious lineages. Only Sikhs spoke of their self-defined Sikh *panth* (community). These designations, inspired by European notions of religion transformed the various Indian and Eastern traditions into so-called world religions. With reference to their texts, philosophies and ethics they were conceived in unified forms along Judaeo-Christian conceptions of the very nature of religion (King, 1999: 104–8). The Eastern religions were introduced by British colonial administrators and systematized by European Orientalists, scholars, and philosophers. They were received as textual objects and kept safe in Oriental libraries and publications such as the fifty volumes of the important *Sacred Books of the East*, begun by Max Müller (1823–1900) in 1879. Again, rites, devotion, and practices were not of interest and were beyond the horizon of European perception (Halbfass, 1981; Schwab, 1984).

p. 538 The encounter between India and Europe went in both directions. In the colonial context, Eastern reformers made use of concepts from the European history of ideas to re-interpret their religious tradition and to argue for change. Foremost, the Bengali Ram Mohan Roy (1772–1833) advocated a unified, purged Hinduism devoid of tradition-inspired practices such as widow burning, now termed idolatry. While his reform community Brāhmo Samāj (founded in 1828) remained small, his writings in Bengali and English received enthusiastic praise in Europe and the United States. Based on his reinterpretations of the *Veda*, *Upanishads*, and *Bhagavad-Gītā*, Roy argued for the idea of a single eternal god as the centre of Hinduism, indeed of all religions. Following deistic theories of priestly deceit and deterioration, Hinduism needed to be freed from traditional accretions and the selfishness of Brahmins which resulted in misinterpretations. In contrast, reason and common sense would enable a true understanding of the meanings of the scriptures.

Roy's key notions of reason and common sense were built on eighteenth-century European thinking and appealed to European readers. He strove for both a reform of Hindu traditions and an Indian assertiveness against the West (Halbfass, 1981: 222–43). Subsequent Hindu reformers, Dayānanda Saraswati (1824–83) and Swami Vivekānanda (1863–1902), as well as Buddhist reformer Anagārika Dharmapāla (1864–1933), made similar use of Western notions and formats (a) to strive for an ethical and charitable reformulation of their religions, and (b) to argue for national independence on the basis of their renewed supreme religions and spirituality. Likewise, the Chinese Buddhist reformer Taixu 太虛 (1890–1947) attempted to demonstrate the modernity of Chinese Buddhism and its capacity to rectify shortcomings in Western science and philosophy. And, Japanese philosophers of the Kyoto school aimed to combine Zen Buddhist insights with European philosophies, thereby stimulating Buddhist studies and criticizing the restricting of Japanese Buddhism to temple services and funerals.

Thus the imperial spread of European sciences, technologies, and missionary Christianity resulted in the sharpening of identities of most Eastern religions. Reformers focused on the written word as the locus of religion and the formulation of key religious contents. Conversely, they criticized tradition and rituals, emphasizing instead both the religious life of the laity and growing geographical extension (King, 1999:



82–104; Bayly, 2004: 330–65). Notably, Eastern religions characterized by these ‘Protestant’ structures were well received in the West, whereas in Asia, large parts of the population beyond the urban centres continued their apotropaic religious practices and beliefs.

## Missions: Eastern reformers and first institutions in the West

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The last quarter of the nineteenth century saw an increasing exchange between Eastern reformers and Western interpreters. In 1875, the flamboyant Helena Blavatsky ♀ (1831–1891) and Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907) founded the Theosophical Society in New York. They merged Egyptian, ancient, and Indian spirituality into a new system of belief. As they saw an assumed primal Buddhism to be central, the two travelled to Colombo, Ceylon, in 1880, to become the first Westerners to turn to Buddhism on Asian soil. Blavatsky soon left Asia whereas Olcott remained in Ceylon. He collaborated with Buddhist reformer Dharmapāla to support disestablished Buddhism in Ceylon, campaigning for a scientific, ritual-critical, and rational Buddhism, as detailed in his globally known *Buddhist Catechism* (1881). Furthermore, in 1891, Dharmapāla established the Mahā Bodhi Society, founded to re-establish the neglected place of Buddha’s awakening at Bodh Gayā (North India) and to strengthen Buddhist self-reliance. Led by a Buddhist lay person, rather than a Theravāda monk, and publishing a journal in English, branches of the society emerged in 1897 in the USA, in 1911 in Germany, and in 1926 in Great Britain. Indeed, Dharmapāla’s participation in the World Parliament of Religions in 1893 in Chicago and his presentation of Buddhism as rational and scientific established him as the putative spokesperson of Buddhism. That said, the Japanese Zen monk Sōen Shaku (1860–1919) also spoke at the Parliament, supported by the later famous Daisetsu T. Suzuki (1870–1966). However, Dharmapāla’s numerous travels to Great Britain and the USA, and indeed to France, Italy, and Germany established him as the foremost Buddhist networker and his Mahā Bodhi Society as the main international Buddhist organization of the time (Gombrich, 1996: 172–97; Kemper, 2015).

In Europe, Dharmapāla’s activities were paralleled by the Pāli Text Society, founded in 1881 by Thomas William Rhys Davids (1843–1922) to further the translation and study of texts from the Pāli canon. Rhys Davids and his wife Caroline interpreted Buddhism as a ‘science of mind’ and an ‘ethical psychology’ which downplayed religious and ritual elements (McMahan, 2008: 52). Similarly, late nineteenth-century members of the life reform movement and free thinkers saw their aims confirmed by the supposed scientific, ethical, and godless nature of Buddhism. First Buddhist converts in Europe praised Buddhism for its reconciliation of science, philosophy, and religion and fervently criticized Christianity as decadent and outdated. As part of this controversy, the first Buddhist societies emerged in 1903 and 1907 in Germany and Great Britain. The Buddhist Mission to Germany sought to spread Buddhist teachings by way of public lectures, leaflets, books, and journals to educated people. Likewise, the Buddhist Society of Great Britain and Ireland, in 1924 superseded by the Buddhist Lodge of the Theosophical Society, established by Christmas Humphreys (1901–1983), addressed learned Londoners. The activities of the lodge were supported by Dharmapāla’s campaign to establish a Buddhist monastery in London. In 1928, the Buddhist *sangha* (order) took root for the first time in Europe with the settlement of three Theravāda monks (Humphreys, 1968; Baumann, 2012, 2018: 387–91, 400–6).

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Parallel to the burgeoning Buddhist activities in Great Britain and Germany was the short-lived Kalmyk Buddhist temple in St Petersburg, built in 1915, and individual efforts in Hungary, Austria, and Italy. And at the same time the first European men went to South Asia to be ordained as Buddhist monks. The Briton Allan Bennett McGregor ♀ (1872–1923) was ordained as Ananda Metteyya in 1902 in Burma and had some organizational impact with a newly established Buddhist journal. The German Anton W. F. Gueth (1878–1957) who was ordained as Nyānatiloka in 1904 in Burma achieved a lasting impact. His numerous translations from the Pāli canon, his Buddhist writings, and his Ceylonese hermitage, founded in 1911, inspired the learned, well-off circles in the German-speaking areas. In contrast to these educated monks,

other Europeans such as the working-class Irishman, ordained as U Dhammaloka, remained unknown for a long time. U Dhammaloka founded various Buddhist organizations in South Asia, vigorously opposed Christian missionaries in Burma, and called on the Burmese to defend their Buddhism. In contrast to the learned monks who worked among the refined European Buddhist circles, U Dhammaloka addressed the colonized Buddhists in South Asia and strove for the uplift of Buddhism. Thus, European men going native as Theravāda monks around 1900 addressed different audiences, with some consolidating and others blurring the boundaries between colonizer and colonized (Bocking *et al.*, 2014).

Similar to the Ceylonese reformer Dharmapāla, the Bengali reformer Vivekānanda achieved a lasting influence in spreading the Hindu Vedānta idea and practices to North America and Europe. Vivekānanda (1863–1902), disciple of the mystic Rāmakrishna Paramahansa (1836–1886) and founder of the monastic Rāmakrishna mission, participated in the 1893 World Parliament of Religions. He eloquently presented Hinduism as the mother of all religions, a religion of universal tolerance and spiritual unity. Vivekānanda embraced the Orientalist terms of India as ‘other worldly’ and ‘mystical’. He praised the teaching of Advaita Vedānta and reinterpreted yoga as practical Vedānta favouring a mystical, inner implementation, while de-emphasizing rituals (King, 1999: 93). He did much to establish the contrast between a spiritual East and a material West, and confidently campaigned for a Hindu assertiveness (Halbfass, 1981: 256–74; Radice, 1998). While the first Vedānta societies were set up as Vivekānanda travelled the USA twice during the 1890s, in Europe Vedānta centres emerged no earlier than in the mid-twentieth century. Furthermore, Vivekānanda had promoted the practice of modernized yoga, influenced by Keshab Chandra Sen who had taken up ideas from Unitarianism and American Transcendentalism. Vivekānanda wrote his *Rāja Yoga* (1896) with the liberal, religiously eastward-looking American audience in mind. His argument that only practical experience provides the fundament for spiritual intuition, nicely captured the spirit of the time expressed in British spiritism, French mesmerism, German life reform movements, and American empirical psychology. Most subsequent interpreters of modern yoga rely on Vivekānanda’s seminal work, such as Indra Devi, B. K. S. Iyengar, and Paramhansa Yogananda, all of whom emphasize the practice of postures over doctrinal knowledge (De Michelis, 2004).

p. 541 Despite the enthusiastically received Neo-Vedānta teachings of Vivekānanda and the praising of Vedānta as the central theology of Hinduism by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888–1975), only limited numbers of Indian people settled in European countries during the nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. Great Britain as the colonial power in India served as the foremost destination for Indian professionals, traders, pedlars, and students. Various high-caste families sent their sons for studies to prestigious British universities, among them Bengali writer Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941, studying in London from 1878 to 1880) and independence leader Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948, studying in London from 1888 to 1891). In addition, rich Sikh families from the Punjab sent their young people for education, with permanent Sikh settlers coming to Scotland, Wales, and Northern England by the mid-1930s. That said, the beginning of Sikh settlement in Great Britain dates back to 1854 as Maharaja Duleep Singh (1833–93), son of the former Punjabi ruler, went into exile after the East India Company took over the *Khālsā Rāj* (Sikh kingdom) in 1849. Subsequently, various Sikh princes came to Britain and a first Sikh *gurdwāra* emerged in Greater London in 1911. Also, numerous Sikh soldiers temporarily stayed in England to recover from their military operations in Belgium, France, Italy, and other countries during the First World War (Singh and Tatla, 2006).

Jains and Chinese also made their way to Europe. Scholar Hermann Jacobi first used the term Jainism in 1879 and differentiated the traditions of the Jains as a religion in its own right. And in 1881, the colonial Census of India employed the category ‘Jain’ for the first time. This noted that British-educated Jains had already campaigned for a public representation in India. From the 1890s onwards, three prominent Jain lawyers came to Britain to study in London at the Bar. They worked to make Jainism known in societies such as the Jain Literature Society in 1909, Jain study circles, and the Rishabh Jain Lending Library in 1930, all of which were in London. However, participation in the societies and at main festivals remained limited to educated

professionals and only changed with the arrival of Jains expelled from East Africa in the 1960s (Flügel, 2005: 1–8).

During the nineteenth century, a limited number of Chinese seafarers employed on British, Dutch, and German steamships settled in the main harbour cities. As the East India Company imported Chinese commodities to London, a first Chinatown with presumably syncretistic Buddhist Confucian temples evolved in the dockland areas of East London. From the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century, Chinese students came to Britain and other European countries. Large numbers of mainland Chinese arrived only with the postwar demand for labour in the 1950s, while further Chinese followed after the political reforms in 1978 and the liberalization of the emigration law of 1985 in China (Benton and Pieke, 1998).

## Pluralization: diversity and dynamic growth of Eastern traditions

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p. 542 During the second half of the twentieth century, Eastern religions boomed both in Europe and beyond. Right after the war, Buddhist activists worked to re-establish the communities founded in the 1920s and 1930s, while others initiated new groups, for example in Germany, Austria, Britain, and other countries. At the same time the 1950s saw the influx of traditions such as Japanese Jōdō Shinshū Buddhism and Nichiren Buddhism. Moreover, Zen Buddhism became known through the more literate reception of the writings of Daisetsu T. Suzuki and Eugen Herrigel. Finally, the Lanka Dhammadūta Society from Ceylon bought and renovated the Berlin Buddhist House, built in 1924 by Paul Dahlke, and placed several Theravāda monks there (Baumann, 2018: 407–9).

The 1960s heralded the beginning of a new phase of engagement with Eastern religions in Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands, France, Italy, and numerous other places. In contrast to the previous reception of Pāli Canon-based Buddhism and dominant interests in intellectual aspects of Buddhist and Hindu ideas, spiritual and practice-based dimensions now gained priority. Zen and *vipassanā* meditation became very popular as new practices to search for inner, mystical experiences. Indian gurus such as Swami Omkarananda, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, founder of Transcendental Meditation, Sri Chinmoy, and others also started coming to Europe to spread their practices and teaching. At the same time, numerous young Western people set out for the hippy trail to India, Nepal, and Burma in search of genuine spirituality and religious guidance by gurus and monks. The romantic yearning for wholeness and originality was sought—once again—in the East. In India, Thailand, and Japan, numerous Western men and women became authorized teachers, newly ordained Buddhist monks, or disciples of a guru. On their return to Europe, they established new, often thriving organizations. To list a few, Sangharakshita (the Briton Dennis Lingwood, 1925–2018), ordained as a Theravāda monk in India, founded the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (later renamed Triratna) in 1967 which became well known in Britain and beyond; Ajahn Sumedho (the American Robert Jackman, 1934–), ordained as a monk in Thailand, successfully established the monastic Forest Tradition in Britain and Europe-wide; Theravāda nun Ayya Khema (the German Ilse Ledermann, 1923–97) spread *vipassanā* meditation in German-speaking parts; Danish lay teachers Ole (1941–) and Hannah Nydahl (1946–2007) spread the Tibetan-inspired Diamond Way Buddhism in a multitude of centres from Greece to Norway and from Russia to Romania. Western Hindu monastics were mainly initiated in the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) established by Swami Prabhupada in 1966. Among others, Tamal Krishna (US-American Thomas Herzig, 1946–2002) disseminated ISKCON in Germany, and Harikesa Swami (US-American Robert Campagnola, 1948–) in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe. Many more Western monks, nuns, and teachers deserve mention as instrumental in spreading Eastern religions in Europe since the 1960s (see in particular Rawlinson, 1997).

The 1970s saw a rapid increase of Tibetan Buddhist centres and guru-oriented groups in most Western European countries. This was followed by the spread of further South and East Asian Buddhist traditions

during the subsequent decades. Also, with the political changes since 1989 in Eastern Europe, Diamond Way Buddhism and ISKCON has spread in former communist countries, establishing numerous centres and temples. In sum, in the past fifty years, a plurality of groups and centres from different guru-led Hindu lineages and almost all Buddhist traditions from Asian countries have been established in European societies. The rapid increase was primarily caused by European people taking up specific Hindu or Buddhist teachings and practices as a new way of life. Clearly, societal processes of individualization were triggering developments that enabled autonomous choices of worldviews and ways of living. At the same time, the proliferating organizations, groups and centres were important, as was the rapidly expanding book market and the opportunities to travel to Asian countries. Finally, the positive, often exoticizing image of Asian religions in Europe, which saw Buddhism as ethical and peaceful and Hinduism as tolerant and exotic—both notions, coined during the nineteenth century colonial encounter—attracted interest among a wide range of social strata.

The boom in founding Buddhist and Hindu groups and centres by Western converts obscured the ongoing processes of immigration from Asian countries. Numerically strong migration flows of Hindus and Sikhs commenced in the 1950s as the British post-war economy found itself in need of labour. The gradually restrictive Immigration Acts during the 1960s induced the start of family reunifications on a large scale. The all-male households changed to family and kinship households. In addition, policies of Africanization in former British East African colonies brought tens of thousands of Hindus, Sikhs, and Jains to Britain. These twice migrants had had previous experiences of establishing cultural, educative, and religious institutions and were instrumental in the founding of Hindu and Jain temples as well as Sikh *gurdwārās*. These places and associations were meant to preserve cultural-religious identity, language, and heritage. The subsequent four decades shaped the different religious communities in Britain and Western European countries, with their firm settlement, continuous numerical growth, emergence of a second generation, gradual social advancement, and the inauguration of grand Hindu temples, Buddhist monasteries, Sikh *gurdwārās*, and Jain *derasars* (temples) (Gallo, 2014).

In Britain, the largest group of Hindus is made up of some 700,000 Vaiṣṇava Gujarati and Punjabi people. Due to its size, subdivisions according to local origin, caste, and sectarian affiliation are prominent. A telling example of the sectarian division is the biggest Hindu temple in Europe, the magnificent Sri Swaminarayan mandir in north-west London. It was built by Gujarati Hindus in the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, a nineteenth-century reform tradition. The 2011 Census for England and Wales states the total number of Hindus as almost 817,000 persons or 1.5 per cent of the British population.

The Netherlands, as former colonial power in Dutch Guyana, received some 40,000 so-called Hindustanis on the independence of Surinam in 1975, which shaped the Hindu composition considerably. In Portugal, the approximately 5,000 Gujarati Hindus, twice migrants from Portugal's former colony Mozambique, together with BAPS Swaminarayan and ISKCON, managed to build a grand temple near Lisbon in 1998. And, in Eastern European countries, guru-oriented organizations such as ISKCON and Sri Chinmoy were able to gather small followings.

In other countries such as Norway, Germany, Switzerland, and France, Śaiva and Śakta Tamil Hindus from Sri Lanka constitute a strong majority. They had been eager to establish a Tamil infrastructure and numerous local temples, often in converted warehouses. While often invisible in everyday life, Tamil Hinduism appears in public with large public processions at the annual temple festivals, for example in Paris. Equally prominent are the new, South Asian-built temples such as the high-rise Sri Kamadchi Ampal temple in Hamm, Germany, and the Sri Murugan temple in East Ham, London (Baumann, 2008; Jacobsen and Sardella, 2020).

Much like Gujarati Hindus in Britain, British Sikhs are divided according to caste, political issues, religious practice, and endemic factionalism, as they are in the Indian Punjab. The internal diversity among the

423,000 British Sikhs (2011 Census) have led to the establishment of more than 200 *gurdwārās* as the central places to continue culture and religion. In contrast, the Sikh *panth* (community) in other European countries such as in Italy, Germany, Spain, and Belgium are considerably smaller and often look towards British Sikhs as a point of reference. Sikh communities in Britain have fought workplace issues such as Sikh males wearing the turban and the *kirpan* (dagger) while in uniform. This provided the model for Sweden to allow Sikhs to wear the turban as members of the police force. In contrast, the Danish court prohibited Sikhs wearing the *kirpan* as an offence against the gun law (Singh and Tatla, 2006; Jacobsen *et al.*, 2017: 452–584).

Jains also came as twice migrants from East Africa from the late 1960s. Clustered in Greater London and the Midlands, Jains turned a former church in Leicester into a fully consecrated Jain *derasar* in 1988. Contrary to sectarian divisions in India, the temple has images of *jinas* (victors) of both Digambara and Śvetāmbara traditions (Banks, 1992). This early pragmatic fusion later changed to fission as the growing economic prosperity of Jains enabled the construction of the marvellously crafted Śvetāmbara *derasar* near Potters Bar, built by the Oshwala community, and other *derasars* in Manchester, Harrow, and Kenton. Since 2010, the biggest Jain temple in Europe is, however, located in Antwerp. Jains started coming to Belgium for commercial activity in 1948, and nowadays exclusively work in the gemstone business. As an affluent community of roughly 1,500 people they constructed the magnificent *derasar* in the Śvetāmbara tradition as a location for their cultural-religious heritage and to ensure the transfer of the Jain tradition to the next generation. Many young people, however, are critical towards Jain guidelines, rituals, and visits to the temple. Rather than simply abiding by prescriptions, many young Jains wish to understand and apply their ethical values to practical life. In this regard, processes of individualization and ethicization are characteristic and fundamentally change the attitude towards the religion engraved in the *derasar* (interviews by author in Antwerp in 2013).

p. 545 Buddhists from various Asian countries came as refugees, professionals, and spouses to Europe. In the early 1960s, Switzerland was the first Western country to receive Tibetan refugees after they had escaped from Tibet to India. Due to growing feelings of homelessness among the Tibetans, the 14th Dalai Lama suggested the building of a monastery with resident Tibetan monks to improve the situation. In 1968, Gelugpa monks inaugurated the monastic Tibet Institute Rikon in canton Zürich, who since then have taken care of the 4,000 Tibetans. In contrast to the immigrant Tibetans, second- and third-generation Tibetans who have grown up in Switzerland ask for explanations of precepts and rules and wish to understand their meanings. For many, Buddhism is an attitude or philosophy of life, devoid of most ritual forms and regular visits to the monastery. Processes of individualization and intellectualization characterize their understanding of Buddhism and fits well with general trends of religiosity in Switzerland and Western Europe (Schlieter, Kind, and Laura, 2014).

Following the Tibetans, in the late 1970s large groups of Vietnamese refugees came to Western European countries as the Vietnam War ended in 1975. In particular France, as former colonial power in South-East Asia, received some 300,000 Vietnamese, as well as Cambodians and Laotian refugees. Vietnamese shops, cultural associations, and Buddhist pagodas became established in numerous places in France with the huge pagoda Khánh Anh near Paris being the central representational place since 2004 (Gidoin, 2017). Rather earlier, in Hannover, northern Germany, Vietnamese Buddhists built the large pagoda Viên Giác to continue cultural-religious rites. In addition to Vietnamese Buddhism and its *sangha* of monks and nuns, Thai Buddhism is established with both the Western monks of the Forest Traditions and Thai monks living in various monasteries for example in Copenhagen, Frankfurt, and Gretzenbach (Switzerland). In Europe, the Thai population of an estimated 300,000 people is primarily made up of Thai women who came as wives of Danish, German, or British men. Lastly, since the 1960s, Japanese professionals and students have introduced Pure Land Buddhism and the new Japanese Buddhist tradition of Sōka Gakkai. Sōka Gakkai claims more than 100,000 members in Europe.

In recent decades, some 50,000 Chinese from Wenzhou in Eastern China settled in Prato in Northern Italy to work in the garment industry. Among the Chinese migrants only few practise their religion, be this Evangelical Protestantism, Catholicism, or Buddhism. However, the Chinese industries dominate the Italian garment production and have led to opposition among Italian locals (Baldassar *et al.*, 2015). Finally, various East Asian new religious movements also have a small following in Europe (Pokorny and Winter, 2018), in addition to some 4,000 Taoists and about 1,000 Shintoists, according to the British 2011 Census (see Table 30.1).

Overall, the numbers of Eastern religions in Europe normally remain under 1 per cent of the population of a country. The allegedly marginal percentage hides, however, the vast variety of religious traditions from Asian countries. These traditions and their different institutions, practices, and representations contribute to the formation of multi-faith Europe.

## Conclusion

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For four centuries, in varying constructions, Eastern religions have represented a hope for the healing of Europe and the promise of a lost experience for religious seekers. The historic reconstruction of the encounter between an idealized Orient and an imperial Occident evidenced shifting characterizations of the East. The eighteenth-century philosophers praised Chinese philosophy as rational and practical whereas the early nineteenth-century Romantic movement glamorized India as a lost paradise of the purest and oldest religions. Sanskrit texts translated into European languages were interpreted as unspoiled inspirations to rejuvenate ossified Europe. Conspicuously, texts were thought to provide the full knowledge of Eastern religions, entrenching the preference for books and knowledge over ritual and practice up to the mid-twentieth century.

**Table 30.1** Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Jains in Europe and in selected countries in 2010–12 and 2020 (projected)

	Hindus	Buddhists	Sikhs	Jains	Total population
Europe 2010	1,400,000	1,350,000	550,000	25,000	742,550,000
2020	1,700,000	1,670,000	n.a	n.a	750,000,000
England & Wales 2011	817,000	248,000	423,000	20,000	56,200,000
2020	1,030,000	380,000	n.a	n.a	59,000,000
Germany 2012	100,000	130,000	10,000	200	82,300,000
2020	80,000	230,000	n.a	n.a	82,200,000
Netherlands 2010	100,000	50,000	12,000	n.a	16,600,000
2020	100,000	50,000	n.a	n.a	17,000,000
Spain 2010	50–60,000	25–30,000	n.a	n.a	46,080,000
2019	80–90,000	40,000	3,000	few	46,800,000
Russia 2010	140,000	700,000	n.a	n.a	142,960,000
2016	150,000	900,000	n.a	n.a	140,000,000

Note: Numbers for Europe in 2010–12 (Pew Research Center, 2016, Jacobsen *et al.*, 2017), England and Wales (2011 Census), Germany (Remid, 2012), Netherlands (Smeets, 2016: 5; persons older than eighteen years), Spain (de Velasco, 2012: 22), Russia (personal communication with Dr. Igor Katkin. St. Petersburg, 11 June 2019). Projected numbers for 2020 from Pew 2016 and for Spain in personal communication with Professor de Velasco, 7 June 2019.

Furthermore, Schopenhauer’s praise of Indian wisdom as a corrective to occidental one-sidedness was continued by pioneer European Buddhists and admirers of Vivekānanda, who employed the Western ascription of the spiritual East and contrasted this to the supposedly material West, with Eastern wisdom as the remedy for Western materialism. Conversely, Olcott, Dharmapāla, and Rhys Davids praised Buddhism as rational and scientific, picturing this ‘science of mind’ as congruent with Western modernity. With the 1960s and its counterculture, the ascribed spirituality of Eastern religions regained importance. The slogan of *ex oriente lux*, the Romantic idea of light and inspiration coming from the East, was translated into practice and personal experience. In contrast to texts and intellectual reasoning, meditation and chanting became prominent. In increasing numbers, Buddhist teachers and Hindu gurus came and directed the new groups and centres formed by Western sympathizers and converts. The process of individualization galvanized the development as it enabled persons to choose ↴ their way of life and religious preference. Within three decades, the offers of Tibetan, Zen, Theravāda, and non-aligned Buddhist schools and various

Hindu guru-lineages multiplied in both Western and Eastern Europe. Nowadays, interested people can pick and choose according to their preferences. The promise of the East undoubtedly persists in Europe, furthered by popular icons such as the 14th Dalai Lama and Vietnamese poet Thich Nhat Hanh as embodiments of the spiritual and mystical East.

Furthermore, the potential benefits of Eastern religions have become readily available outside the texture of religion and spirituality. In view of the steady decline of religious belief and belonging in Europe, erstwhile religious practices of the East are performed in secularized forms. Yoga has found a large audience, performing the postures previously popularized by Vivekānanda, Iyengar, and other teachers in a multitude of settings. Predominantly practised by women of all ages, varied forms of yoga expression promise recreation, self-discovery, body fitness, and personal health. Similar to yoga, Buddhist meditation practices have gone mainstream. Originally limited to Theravāda monks, twentieth-century reforms in South Asia began to include the laity, a practice that US-American disciples of the Thai and Burmese teachers both popularized and secularized. Mindfulness has become widespread as a method of stress-reduction, relaxation, and calmness. Furthermore, techniques such as Chinese Qigong and Tai-chi, as well as Japanese Reiki, aim to achieve body balance and good health for the practitioner.

Additionally, in Western consumer societies artefacts of Asia, such as a Buddha figure or a miniature Chinese fountain, have become popular accessories for the living room or garden. The commercialization of Eastern artefacts has grown to a multi-million-euro market. Online shops offer all kinds of Buddha figures and statues of Hindu gods, Tibetan sound bowls, Japanese teapots, and much more. The generally positive image of Eastern religions has been turned into market-ready products for personal wellness and consumption. Critics of the commercial development point to the 'long tradition of European colonialist attitude towards Asia', which translates into the commodification of Asian artefacts, practices, and concepts (Carrette and King, 2005: 89). Likewise, cultural theorist Slavoj Žižek critiques the New Age 'Asiatics' and Western Buddhism especially: '[T]his pop-cultural phenomenon preaching inner distance and indifference toward the frantic pace of market competition, is arguably the most efficient way for us fully to participate in capitalist dynamics while maintaining the appearance of mental sanity—in short, the paradigmatic ideology of late capitalism' (Žižek, 2003: 26). While Žižek has a point in the apolitical attitude of many practitioners, he omits Buddhist criticisms of consumerism and the growing movement of engaged Buddhism. Critics of Žižek also criticize his biased appraisal of Buddhism, swayed by his militant atheistic perspective.

Above all, the Western representation of Eastern religions as a 'promise' in both religious and secular forms, ignores the very different perspectives of the numerically large communities of immigrant people from Asian countries, East Africa, and the Caribbean. Constituting more than two-thirds of practitioners of an Eastern religion in European countries, these Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, and Jain communities seem at odds with the Western search for inner, mystic experiences and for solutions to Europe's problems. ↴ Indeed, the immigrants often brought ritual practices and cultural interpretations of their traditions which do not fit well with the ideas of convert Buddhists and Hindus. For this reason, converts more or less ignored the immigrant communities. In the past two decades, however, and partly due to the increasing involvement of people from the more individualized and concept-oriented second generation, the two strands have drawn closer together and cooperate in order to represent their religions in national and pan-European umbrella organizations. Nowadays, prestigious, publicly visible Hindu and Jain temples, Sikh *gurdwārās*, and Buddhist monasteries point both to a firm institutionalization and the growing impact of Eastern religions. No longer relegated to back-door places of worship and service, the minorities have started to enter the mainstream of religiously plural European societies.



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## Notes

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- 1   The rites controversy arose from the following question: could Jesuit missionaries, in their strategy of adapting to Chinese imperial court rites, participate in Taoist ancestor worship and Confucian ceremonies? The missionaries considered the rites civic whereas the Catholic Church classed them as religious and incongruous with the Catholic doctrine (Millar, 2007: 19).

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CHAPTER

## 31 Non-religion and Europe

Josh Bullock, Stephen Bullivant

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### Abstract

This chapter is concerned with the growing phenomenon of non-religion and its place in modern Europe. The secular is hardly a new idea in European history but its nature and forms evolve. The focus here is on the growing significance of non-religion in the twenty-first century, especially among younger people. This phenomenon is approached in different ways: conceptually, statistically, and ethnographically. The conceptual approach emphasizes the shift away from simply the absence of religion to the presence of a positively chosen alternative. The statistical section underlines the considerable variations in the presence of non-religion both within and across the different parts of Europe and the reasons for this. Finally, three ethnographic vignettes illustrate the diverse ways in which substantive and engaged expressions of non-religion ‘make sense’ within their particular socio-religious contexts.

**Keywords:** non-religion, secular, secularization, Europe, statistical approach, ethnographic approach

**Subject:** History of Religion, Religion

**Series:** Oxford Handbooks

THIS chapter not only identifies but explains the new emphasis on non-religion among scholars of religion in Europe (and elsewhere) in the twenty-first century it also explores some of the methodological issues that arise in this field. An important shift is underlined from the outset: that is an increasing emphasis on treating non-religious people, beliefs, communities, and cultures positively rather than negatively, in other words as a presence in their own right rather than merely the absence of something else—in this case religion.

To do this, the chapter unfolds as follows. It starts with a brief overview of non-religion from an historical point of view. The current emphasis may be distinctive, but the secular has been present in Europe since its inception and has ebbed and flowed over centuries rather than decades. The ‘turn’ to non-religion as such is then explored in more detail, paying attention to what this means, how it is defined, and why it has gathered speed in the new millennium. A section on the European Social Survey (ESS) follows, providing an overview of the prevalence of the ‘no religion’ population across twenty-two countries, together with the reasons for the considerable variation in non-religiosity across the continent, drawing particular attention to the divide

between the ‘Western’ and ‘Central and Eastern’ regions of Europe. In the final part of the chapter, three qualitative case studies have been chosen to represent three very different countries: the UK, Norway, and Poland. The aim of these vignettes is to display the contrasting and context-dependent ways, in which concrete non-religion is manifesting itself in twenty-first-century Europe. A short conclusion draws the threads of the chapter together.

## The secular in European history

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James O’Connell (1991) identified three formative factors in the making and remaking of Europe: these are the Judaeo-Christian tradition, Greek secularism, and Roman organization. Over two millennia all three have combined and recombined in different ways to form the entity that we know as Europe. Clearly the secular thread is as significant as the religious in this process and has come to the fore in a variety of forms at different moments in European history. These vary in nature and include (among many others) the political, the scientific, and the social. Some of these forms are chosen; others are imposed by political regimes—themselves secular—that brook no opposition. The following examples are indicative of a huge range of possibilities.

The political secularism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century is captured in the French case. Both the philosophical and political upheavals symbolized by the French Revolution (1789), and the sequence of events that followed after, were central to the secularizing process, in which the notion of *laïcité* is pivotal.<sup>1</sup> The ensuing debates dominated French history in the nineteenth century, in a series of confrontations referred to as ‘la guerre des deux Frances’: one monarchical, Catholic, and conservative, the other republican, *laïque*, and progressive (Poulat, 1987). The decoupling of the French state from the Catholic Church did not become definitive until 1905, when it was inscribed in the law on the separation of church and state.<sup>2</sup> The creation of a fully secular school system (in the 1880s) was part and parcel of the same process.

Rather different were the intellectual challenges to religious belief that came from the opposition between science and religion in the mid-nineteenth century, epitomised in the epic struggles between creationism and Darwinian theories of human evolution. These were intellectual debates, redolent of earlier clashes between Galileo and the Catholic Church over the Copernican understanding of the universe, and picked up once again in the late twentieth century by the group known as the ‘new atheists’, spearheaded by Richard Dawkins. Such clashes continued into the new century (Amarasingham, 2012). Different again was the revolution in social mores that took place in the 1960s. Not everything happened at once but by the end of this turbulent decade a series of changes had taken place that affected almost every sector of society, not least an extraordinarily rapid change in sexual attitudes and practice. Against this background, traditional, conservative—and often Christian-based—values could no longer be taken for granted: questioned by many, they were discarded by increasing numbers who either rejected or ignored the discipline of the churches and the ideas that they stood for.

In the 1960s, religious practice fell away noticeably in Western Europe. Further east, however, a rather different picture was emerging in the parts of Europe that found themselves under Soviet domination following the Second World War. In communist Europe the pervasive ideology was secularism, at times aggressive. Anything other than private belief was considered a threat to the regime and was rigorously suppressed, sometimes brutally. Unsurprisingly, religious practice fell away here as well, though for different reasons and more so in some places than others—a point developed below.

## The ‘non-religious turn’

Since the turn of the millennium, European scholars of religion have found a rather different focus for their work, in the study of what has come to be known as ‘non-religion’. This recent coinage—or rather, re-coinage (see Guyau, 1897)—is a deliberately broad term, describing a variety of ‘[p]henomena primarily identified in contrast to religion, including but not limited to those rejecting religion’ (Bullivant and Lee, 2016). It includes a wide range of social and cultural manifestations of atheism, agnosticism, indifference, non-religiosity (e.g., religious non-practice and non-affiliation), secularity, and other ‘religion-adjacent’ topics.

As already indicated, the primary significance of the ‘non-religious turn’ (Rommel Václavík, and Bubík, 2020a) is not so much one of topic, as it is one of focus, emphasis, and mindset. To put the point in classical Durkheimian terms, non-religious phenomena are now approached as being real, substantive ‘social facts’ in their own right (cf. Durkheim, 1982 [1895]: 50–9). They are not simply the ‘empty space’ left when the social facts of religious belief, practice, belonging, capital or whatever else have ebbed away or, as in some parts of Central and Eastern Europe during the twentieth century, been forcibly removed. Nor, in the case of (say) organized secularist groups or campaigns, can they fully be understood as solely a mirror image or photographic negative of—or indeed parasite upon—religious ideas or groups. As the American sociologist Christian Smith has noted, using the specific terms ‘secularity’ and ‘secularism’ though one could equally well substitute ‘non-religion’:

Secularity and secularism are areas in which sociologists of religion have increasingly focused in recent years, ‘the secular’ becoming more properly understood as not a neutral, default human position or category, but instead a contingently situated, particular stance and type, the exigencies of which are worth empirical investigation. (2014: x, n. 4)

Before proceeding, some concrete examples might help to make this point more clearly. Hitherto, for example, ‘no religion’ has often been regarded as simply the neutral absence of a (religious) identity—with ‘none’ or ‘non-religious’ thus being a vacant none-of-the-above identity category, artificially created by survey research (e.g., Pasquale, 2007). Lois Lee’s qualitative studies of the ‘non-religious’ in London, however, show both ‘how generic non-religious identifications are not merely imposed on people by social researchers but can be made and performed by them in their everyday lives’ (2015: 132), and the various and subtle ways in which their non-religiosity plays out substantively in their actions and activities. In short, ‘it is wrong to assume that the “nones” are always nothings’ (2015: 153; see also Lee, 2014). This way of viewing aspects of non-religiosity as ‘somethings’, with their own sociocultural causes, effects, contexts, and correlates, permits a number of the themes in European sociology of religion to be viewed in a new light.

In practice, a great deal of the existing scholarship on secularization has, in practice, been the study of ‘de-religionization’. That is to say, the analytic focus has typically been the weakening of religious belief, identity, and practice, and/or on the waning social influence of religious ideas or groups. Only rarely has the focus been on the numerical growth or increasing cultural salience of the beliefs, practices, identities, communities, influence, which replace them. This is the difference, possibly, between conducting the inquest into ‘the death of Christian Britain’ (Brown, 2001) and charting ‘the growth and maturing of noreligionism’ (Brown, 2012: 28) or ‘becoming atheist’ (Brown, 2017), over the same period. Or alternatively, between narrating ‘how the Church of England lost the English people’ (Brown and Woodhead, 2016) and exploring ‘the rise of “No Religion” [... as] the emergence of a new cultural majority’ (Woodhead, 2016). These ‘twinning’ topics, though obviously and necessarily related, are not simply interchangeable. In both cases, the change of analytic focus from ‘religious decline’ to ‘non-religious increase’ is not purely semantic. They may well be two sides of the same coin (cf. Davie, 2013). But as also



with coins, the two sides differ substantively in both appearance and meaning. The obverse is by no means simply the mirror-image of the reverse, or vice versa.

## Measuring non-religion

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This understanding of non-religion as ‘not a neutral, default human position or category, but instead a contingently situated, particular stance and type, the exigencies of which are worth empirical investigation’ (Smith, 2014: x, n. 4)—that is, as a ‘something’ rather than a nothing—has important implications for how best to measure and explore it. The most basic, and bluntest, way is to glean what is possible from largescale social surveys, which often ask questions about religious affiliation and (less often) practice and belief. This is true of several international survey programmes, which periodically ask the same questions (translations permitting) across a range of European countries more-or-less simultaneously, such as the European Values Study (every nine years, since 1981), and the International Social Survey Programme (annually since 1985, but with dedicated ‘Religion’ modules in 1991, 1998, 2008, and 2018).<sup>3</sup> Such surveys, employing nationally representative samples, are a reliable means of gaining a ‘big picture’ overview of religious patterns. They are especially useful for drawing meaningful comparisons between different countries in the same year (i.e., ‘does country X have more Christians/Muslims/Jews than country Y?’, ‘are X’s Catholics, on average, more religiously practising or believing than Y’s or Z’s?’), or between different years within the same country (e.g., ‘have overall levels of religious affiliation/practice in X risen or fallen over the past twenty years?’, ‘are today’s 18–30 year old Christians in Y more or less likely to attend church weekly than Y’s 18–30 year-old Christians did twenty years ago?’).

Two caveats are worth noting, however. The first is that, over and above the inherent limits of survey research, questions designed for measuring religion can only go so far in understanding non-religion (see Remmel and Uibu, 2019 [2015]: 479–80). While they are an indispensable starting point, to probe deeper it is necessary either to design new surveys (cf. Bullivant *et al.*, 2019), or to employ much richer and more nuanced qualitative methodologies (see below)—and preferably both.

The second is that (non)religious identity/affiliation is often a complex and ambivalent affair. It brings together aspects—positive or negative, weak or strong—of upbringing, belief, past and current practice, feelings of belonging, and one’s sense of place vis-à-vis familial, cultural, ethnic, social, and national traditions. Different people, naturally, weight each aspect differently. For some, simply having been raised as a Catholic, regardless of present practice or conviction, is enough to make them ‘always a Catholic’; for others, only those who believe every tenet, and fulfil every obligation, count as ‘real’ adherents. Many, perhaps most, people find themselves somewhere between these two extremes. Regardless of where this line is drawn, a significant proportion of people *know* what they ‘are’, religiously speaking, and can be relied upon to answer ‘Catholic’ (or ‘Zoroastrian’, or whatever) when asked. For such people, the precise wording of a question, or the context in which it is posed, is unlikely materially to affect the answer they give. For others, however, questions with different nuances of wording, or even the same question asked at different times, may elicit differing responses.

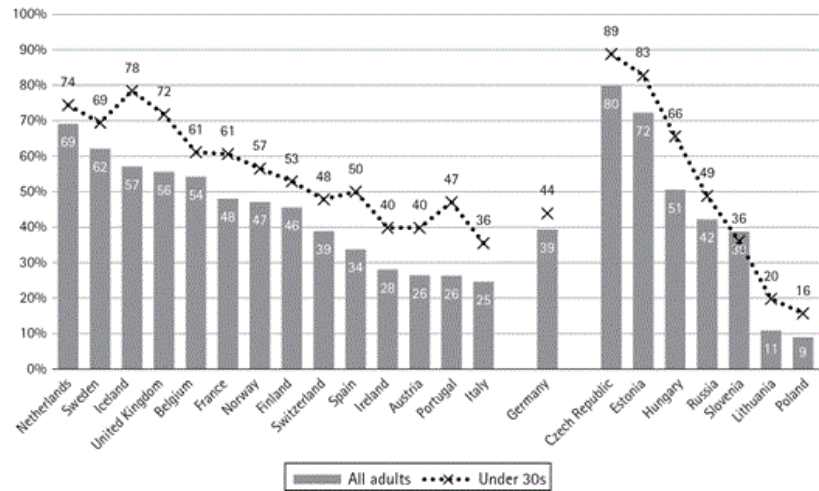
It is easy to imagine why this might be: why, for example, the same person may feel a ‘Catholic’ in some ways (e.g., sacramentally, culturally, in some beliefs, and to some degree of practice), and as someone of ‘No religion’ in other ways (e.g., in terms of current lifestyle, certain other beliefs or doubts, and in lack of regular practice). Especially if it is not a question they are asked very often, seemingly slight differences in the wording of the question or a host of other, contextual factors might provoke either response (Day and Lee, 2014; Hackett, 2014). These so-called liminal nones have recently begun to attract serious sociological attention (Chaeyoon Lim, McGregor, and Putnam, 2010; Hout, 2017). There are, moreover, good reasons for thinking that the phenomenon might be particularly significant in countries where secularizing processes

are well underway, but in which religious traditions and organizations still retain a widespread cultural role (or did until quite recently). This hypothesis, recognizing ‘the complex and messy relationships between [...] different aspects and forms of religion which make up the “fuzzy frontiers” of religious identity’ (Gregg and Scholefield, 2015: 10) would go a long way to explaining the variable rates of (non)religious affiliation gauged using different survey/census questions, as for example in the UK (Voas and Bruce, 2004; Day, 2011) and Ireland (Bullivant, 2017a).

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Keeping these qualifications in mind, the figures from the 2016 European Social Survey, including data from twenty-two countries, are revealing. The ESS asks a two-stage religious affiliation question: ‘Do you consider yourself belonging to any particular religion or denomination? (Yes/No)’, with a follow-up ‘If so, which?’ for those answering yes.<sup>4</sup>

Figure 31.1



Proportions of total adult population, and 16–29-year-olds, identifying as having no religion in selected European countries, 2016. (European Social Survey, 2016; weighted data)

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Figure 31.1. presents the proportions of ‘nones’ in both the general adult population, and among young adults (i.e., 16–29-year-olds), arranged into three groups: fourteen Western European countries towards the left of the graph; seven Central and Eastern European countries towards the right; and Germany alone between them. These divisions are not, of course, simply geographical (most of Austria is as ‘Central’ as the Czech Republic; Finland lies significantly ‘East’ of Slovenia), but rather relate to twentieth-century geopolitical history. Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) is a cipher for countries that formed part of the ‘Eastern Bloc’ of communist countries during a roughly forty-year period from the end of the Second World War until 1989 (though some of these countries, especially Russia, were communist-controlled for a longer period than this). Western Europe is less easily defined: over this same period, most of these countries were democracies (though not Spain or Portugal for much of it), and/or allied to the United States via NATO (though not the officially neutral countries Ireland, Switzerland, Austria, Norway, and Finland); in practice, ‘not-communist’ is probably their simplest unifier. Contemporary Germany, as the reunified product of West Germany and the (Eastern bloc) German Democratic Republic, combines both sides of Europe’s geopolitical divide, and hence sits between the two (on the resulting, hybrid German case, see Braun, Gräß, and Zachhuber, 2007; Wohlrab-Sahr, 2011).

Before considering the relevance of the last millennium’s political history for understanding contemporary non-religion, it is worth noting first the striking variability within each of the two main groupings. Europe is not, in the global scheme of things, a particularly large place. Yet, even at this bluntest level of analysis, there are notable differences in the proportions of ‘nones’: 69 per cent of the Dutch to only 25–26 per cent



of Italians, Portuguese, and Austrians. Even adjoining countries, where a priori one might expect the likelihood of shared culture and history to produce similar religious results, can diverge by a fair margin: Italy (25 per cent) versus France (48 per cent), or indeed Ireland (28 per cent) and the United Kingdom (56 per cent). A posteriori, however—that is, informed by a proper understanding of the distinct-but-intertwined social, cultural, political, and religious histories of these countries (with the UK and Ireland a case in point)—these divergences make a great deal of sense.

Traditionally, sociologists of European religion have further subdivided the continent, based on precisely these kinds of historical and contextual factors, into different explanatory subgroups: historically ‘Catholic’, ‘Lutheran’, and ‘mixed’ countries, to give a classic example (Davie, 2000); or even into specific sub-subgroups thought to be particularly noteworthy for one reason or another (see, for example, ‘Orange Exceptionalism’ in Greeley, 2003 197–212). While no wholly clear-cut patterns emerge from Figure 31.1, it is surely worth noting that the five least non-religious (by affiliation) countries in the sample are all historically Catholic, whereas only one of the most non-religious—Belgium—is. That observation, however, needs further scrutiny. It might simply be, for example, that a ‘nominal’ or ‘cultural’ religious identity persists slightly longer in Catholic communities than in Protestant ones (see Bullivant, 2019).

Turning now to the Central and Eastern countries, most striking here is not simply the variation between the countries (as in the West), but the much greater extremes. Indeed, across the entire twenty-two-country sample, the two highest and two lowest non-religious nations both occur among the seven post-communist examples. Furthermore, the religiously mixed Czech Republic with 80 per cent nones, and Lithuania and Poland—both traditionally Catholic countries—with 11 per cent and 9 per cent nones are significantly higher/lower than the Western ‘extremes’. This is important for several reasons. There has been a tendency among Western scholars to bracket the (now former) communist countries, and to treat them as being socially, economically, and religiously homogeneous; as, indeed, a monolithic ‘Eastern bloc’. But as scholars from these countries—whose writings on (non)religion, as on other areas, have are becoming more and more widely accessible (see Remmel, Václavík, and Bubík, 2020b for a wonderfully useful English-language survey of non-religion in these countries)—have long emphasized, this is a grave misconception (Zrinščak, 2004; Borowik, Ančić, and Tyrała, 2013). As the Hungarian sociologist Miklós Tomka noted: ‘Eastern Europe was artificially integrated by Soviet power for decades. This recent, but historically short intermezzo did not eliminate differences between subregions and countries’ (2002: 483).

Tomka elaborated this point as follows: not only did pre-modern and highly modernized societies live side by side, but some countries of the Soviet bloc had churches in the Eastern tradition, while others had churches in the Western tradition. ‘The former had little historical experience of the social and cultural differentiation that countries further west had experienced in the Investiture Dispute, the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Enlightenment’ (Tomka, 2004: 106). As a result, traditions and mental dispositions differed markedly as did the social rooting of the churches. ‘In Poland, for example, ‘the church organization could keep its independence over against the party state. In other countries the power of the religious organization was broken or forced to bend the knee’ (Tomka, 2004: 106). Furthermore, the officially atheist ideologies and policies of the various communist parties were not uniform either across the region, or over time within each country (most notably, see Smolkin’s (2018) fascinating history of Soviet atheism). Given the complexities of the interacting factors it is perhaps not surprising that communist atheization—both forced and ‘encouraged’—should have produced such extremes of effect, in both directions, even within the small subsample of countries that appear in the ESS data. Nor that there should be a higher ‘standard deviation’ within these countries (especially bearing in mind that the main outliers of Poland and the Czech Republic share a border) when compared to the more ‘organic’ (Zuckerman, 2007) or ‘natural process of secularization’ (Bercken, 1989: 77; cf. Tomka, 1991) prevalent within Western Europe.

For all the above paragraphs’ emphasis on difference, both within and between the two main groupings, it is worth noting finally one striking degree of near-universal commonality. Across all countries, with the

single exception of Slovenia, young adults are appreciably more likely than the general adult population to identify as having no religion. Furthermore, despite a small number of exceptions (Slovenia, plus the particular highs of Spain, Portugal, Iceland, and the UK) this difference is surprisingly consistent with a mean difference across all twenty-two countries of ten percentage points. While it is possible that in some countries this is primarily a lifecycle effect (i.e., young adults are always likely to identify as having no religion, but then they generally [re]identify later in life), there is now a very strong body of evidence suggesting the likelihood of generational religious decline (e.g., Storm and Voas, 2012; Voas, 2015).

## Three case studies

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It seems therefore, that much of Europe is increasingly becoming a post-Christian society with young adults in particular neither identifying with, nor practising religion. That said, Europe's nations exhibit a great deal of diversity in their (non)religious sociocultural climates: there is no one 'European' pattern. Put differently, the decline in Christianity in much of Europe has given rise to very varied and often innovative ways to 'belong'.

p. 559 In the following section are three case studies of organized and 'positive' non-religion.<sup>5</sup> First, the Sunday Assembly, a secular congregation originating in London. Second, the Norwegian Humanist Association, which shares a democratic and ethical life stance. And third, the Kazimierz Łyszczyński Foundation (KLF) originating in Warsaw, an organization furthering both atheism and secular ethics. The Sunday Assembly functions like an Evangelical-style church for non-religious people; the Norwegian Humanists provide structure and support for a constituency that still wants to mark life events with rituals and ceremonies; and the KLF promotes women's and atheist rights in face of a populist right-wing government closely linked with Catholicism. As in the previous section, the discussion of the West European cases precedes the Central European example, and each case reflects the religious culture of which it is part.

### UK: Sunday Assembly

The UK Sunday Assembly is among the best-known examples of organized non-religion to become visible both within society and in academic scholarship. It was set up in January 2013 by stand-up comedians Sanderson Jones and Pippa Evans: first as an 'atheist church', then as a 'godless congregation', and currently as a 'secular congregation'. By 2019, this was a registered charity (running solely on donations) and had franchised forty-one successful congregations in eight countries, including a strong presence in the United States. The Sunday Assembly's motto is 'Live Better, Help Often and Wonder More' (Sunday Assembly, 2013). Its goal is to be 'a global network of people who want to make the most of this one life we know we have', and its vision is to establish 'a godless congregation in every town, city and village that wants one' (Sunday Assembly, 2013).

p. 560 It began in London, the city which houses the largest non-religious population in Britain.<sup>6</sup> London, moreover, is the biggest congregation and has set the tone, style, and format for others in the franchise. Meeting at the Conway Hall,<sup>7</sup> on the first and third Sunday of each month the Sunday Assembly regularly attracts 400–500 people. A wide range of small group interactions take place throughout the week outside the main 'service', including a choir, article club, theatre and dance, and opportunities for volunteering. The Sunday Assembly frequently self-describes as having 'the best bits ↴ of church, awesome pop songs, but no religion'. Rather than singing hymns, they opt for popular music ranging from Queen to Carly Rae Jepsen. Rather than listening to a sermon, they opt for a TED Talk;<sup>8</sup> and rather than praying, they have a secular moment of reflection. The structure also includes a member of the congregation taking to the stage in a testimonial style 'trying their best' section. In this respect, the Sunday Assembly acts as a secular mirror—leveraging on distinctive and relatively popular forms of Christianity.

The current and previous beliefs of ‘Assemblers’ highlight how many of them have followed a similar trajectory: transitioning into post-Christianity by leaving a Christian faith and now identifying as primarily non-religious and/or atheist, humanist, or agnostic. Some participants identified with one of these terms, others with some or all of them: they could be non-religious in life-style, atheistic regarding God(s), agnostic about the universe, and humanistic in their values. The majority of the participants (75 per cent) had grown up with varying degrees of Christianity in their background.<sup>9</sup> This was often a source of nostalgia, whether it was attending Sunday School as a child or being a member of an evangelical or new religious movement when older. The remaining 25 per cent, who grew up non-religious, were seeking a secular community, seeing the value of community in religion. The vast majority of the Sunday Assembly are ethnically white and do not reflect the diversity of Greater London. The age range is predominantly Generation Y—that is, those born between 1980 and the mid-1990s—who were 20 to 35 years old at the time of our study.

It is Generation Y that has provided the appropriate conditions for the Sunday Assembly to create a small-scale global congregational movement. Clichéd as it may sound, the world was not ready for the Sunday Assembly even twenty-five years ago—simply put, it would not have served a purpose; nor was the role of the internet and social media sufficiently developed—a crucial factor in the rise of organized non-religion. However, with the dawn of the new millennium, then post-9/11, post-new-atheism, and amid a decline in Christianity in the UK, the Sunday Assembly has been able to thrive as a ‘half-way house’ for those leaving their religion and those who had never been religious, but who are seeking what religious communities have to offer (not least an abundance of social capital, and a sense of belonging).

All that said, and despite its relative success, the future of the Sunday Assembly is uncertain. Franchised congregations have already failed in many cities including Paris and Berlin.<sup>10</sup> If Christian heritage is abandoned completely, the current model of the Sunday Assembly will no longer resonate. Alternatively, it can adapt: embracing ‘secular spirituality’ or ‘well-being’, or even training its congregational leaders as secular chaplains, thereby creating new rituals and strengthening community ties.

p. 561 **Norway: *Human-Etisk Forbund***

In 2019, the state-funded Norwegian Humanist Association (*Human-Etisk Forbund* [NHA]), founded in 1956, had 120 local/county offices and a large main office in Oslo. This is one of the largest Humanist Associations in the world (and the largest of all in proportion to population) with more than 90,000 members, equalling 2 per cent of the Norwegian population. If the Sunday Assembly represents a particular type of organized non-religion drawing on a post-Christian culture and a need for congregational belonging, the NHA provides a more structured approach in terms of ceremonies and rituals for life events. This is a campaigning organization (for example against the ritual circumcision of boys); it also offers community gatherings (activities such as board game/movie/philosophy/debate nights for their youth chapter).

Gordon-Lennox and colleagues (2017: 90) explain that until 1911, Christian confirmation in Norway was obligatory, a rite made mandatory for all young people by the Protestant Church of Denmark-Norway. From 1736, citizenship was dependent on confirmation. In 1951 the NHA established a secular alternative ‘so that non-religious youth could confirm and keep their integrity’ (Gordon-Lennox *et al.*, 2017: 90) and thus maintain a tradition that was culturally engrained. Currently, Norwegian youth have the option of marking this coming-of-age celebration through either a humanist or a church confirmation.<sup>11</sup> Siri Sandberg (2018) states that approximately 20 per cent (c.12,000 in 2019) of 15-year-olds opt for a NHA confirmation, whereas 60 per cent still opt for the traditional Protestant rite, and 20 per cent for nothing at all. It is worth noting that the numbers of people selecting secular rituals for life events in general remain very constant.

Gordon-Lennox and colleagues (2017: 92) also remark that in recent years ‘young people participate because humanist confirmation has become part of their family tradition’. After sixty-five years, it seems that in some families humanist confirmation has become established practice over several generations. Sandberg (2018) explains that an essential element in completing the confirmation process is a course that explores questions of identity, human rights, and ethics. This course poses ethical questions to the candidates who are fourteen when they sign up. Thus, they are exposed to ideas that they may not have previously considered. The overall aim of the course is to make young people more aware of their own viewpoints and values.

It is not assumed that they are all humanists, since they are in the process of finding out who they are and what their worldview is. The goal is not to force them towards humanism but rather to encourage them to develop a considered outlook as they embark on the path to adulthood.

(Sandberg, 2018)

p. 562 In 2020, the Humanist Youth (*Humanistisk Ungdom*) had 1,000 members aged 15 to 25.<sup>12</sup> They exist as an individual organization, not simply as a group within the NHA, with their own governing structure, board and budget, and with an elected leader and two full time employees. Across Norway they have sixteen local chapters. Fieldwork in their Kristiansand branch (in South Norway) revealed more about humanistic rituals and ceremonies, notably ‘Camp Refugee’. A participant narrates:

[You] simulate being a refugee travelling across borders, travelling to different refugee camps, getting to Norway and trying to get into Norway, getting asylum, and then automatically getting rejected. This is all taking place over 24 hours. It’s really intense. You barely get any food [same calories as a refugee would have]. You barely get any sleep. You don’t know what time it is ... I think it was really important in giving people perspective, because when you’re talking about refugees we often forget that these are humans that have suffered a great amount getting here, and having some sympathy for their experience, and knowing some of what they go through, and not just they got here and are trying to basically live off everyone else.

## Poland: *Fundacja im. Kazimierz Łyszczyński*

The third case study is located in Warsaw, Poland. Kazimierz Łyszczyński (1634–89) was a Polish philosopher and author of *De non existentia Dei* [*On the non-existence of God*]. The surviving fragments of the manuscript proclaim that ‘man is the creator of God’ and exists only in the human mind being nothing more than a concept. Łyszczyński was the first well-known atheist in Poland, and was accused by one of his debtors of having denied the existence of God; he was tried and executed for his atheistic beliefs in 1689 (Kraśiński, 1840), suffering a horrific death in the Old Town Market Place in Warsaw. In communist Poland Łyszczyński was celebrated as a martyr to the atheist cause.

The *Fundacja* (foundation) *im. Kazimierz Łyszczyński* (KLF) was established in 2013—in the same year as the Sunday Assembly—as an organization working for the freedom of conscience, word and expression and secularism of the state, as well as promoting the worldview of atheism and secular ethics.<sup>13</sup> In 2019, the KLF organized their sixth annual ‘Days of Atheism’ conference on the 330th anniversary of the death of their patron. In the course of this meeting, a variety of topics were discussed, notably freedom of choice and the need to protect the rights of discriminated groups, as well as ethical and moral issues such as the right to end your own life. In addition, there was careful scrutiny of both financial and child abuse on the part of the Catholic Church.

p. 563 The KLF has the following goals. It aims to inform the Polish public on issues relating to rationalism whilst at the same time promoting the constitutional principle of the separation of church and state. Members

aspire to popularize science and scientific method and to establish a knowledge-based society. They defend the rights of people experiencing discrimination on the basis of ‘worldview, gender, sexual orientation, race or ethnicity’, sentiments captured by their Vice-President, Nina Sankari; ‘It’s clear that without liberation from religious oppression, there will be no women’s rights ... Without a secular state there will be no democracy’.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the KLF supports the activities of other non-religious international organizations (e.g. Humanists International). It strives for the idea of an ‘open society’ and the protection of human rights, freedom and civil liberties, in particular the combating of prejudice and right to equality.

The KLF is similar to the Sunday Assembly in so far as its hosts community-building activities such as ‘atheist picnics’ (up to fifty people) and other gatherings, as well as innovative contests—for example the ‘atheist of the year’ award, which recognizes individuals, organizations, and institutions for ‘counteraction against discrimination based on belief’. But unlike the Sunday Assembly, the KLF was born out of opposition to religion; there is no nostalgia here. And if the Sunday Assembly acts as a ‘secular mirror’, the KLF functions as a focus of resistance to what it sees as populist, nationalist and Catholic oppression. Importantly the KLF links its secular and atheist battles to feminism and women’s rights. They take this stance for two reasons. First, they view religion to be oppressive particularly towards women, and second, they want to change the face of atheism as an ‘all-male club’. As a result, they have developed close links to the Family Planning and Women’s Rights Federation (Federa) and the Polish Women on Strike (OSK) with members of the KLF and women’s rights organizations supporting and speaking at each other’s events.

The KLF is not associated with any political party; rather they support the secular demands of any party which formulates them (in Poland, this will mean left-wing parties). The KLF attracts a membership with an average age of 40-plus, but also includes a number of retired people and a few (very few) students. It is predominantly white (such is the demography in Poland) and middle-class—thus a similar but slightly older demographic to that of the Sunday Assembly.

## Conclusion

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This chapter began with a short overview of the place of the secular in European history. Its primary focus has, however, been the recent (twenty-first-century) and growing significance of non-religion in the lives of increasing numbers of especially young Europeans. This phenomenon has been approached in different ways: conceptually, statistically, and in three ethnographic vignettes. The conceptual approach emphasized the shift away from the absence of religion to the presence of a positively chosen alternative. The statistical section underlined the considerable variations in the presence of non-religion both within and across the different parts of Europe. The vignettes illustrated the diverse ways in which substantive and engaged expressions of non-religion ‘make sense’ within their particular socio-religious contexts.

Important as the latter are, it is clear that the great majority of Europe’s non-religious have little or no involvement with organized non-religion in the sense of ‘[a]ctivities formally organized for the purpose of discussing, practising, or promoting nonreligion’ (Bullivant and Lee, 2016). To what extent this may change over time remains, of course, an open question. Far less uncertain, judging from the evidence adduced in Figure 31.1 (see also Bullivant, 2018), is that non-religion—in whatsoever forms it manifests itself—looks set to be an ever-more prominent feature of the European religious landscape in the decades to come.

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## Notes

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- 1 The notion of *laïcité* is difficult to translate into English; it means the absence of religion in the public sphere, notably the state and school system.
- 2 *La loi du 9 décembre 1905 concernant la séparation des Eglise et de l'Etat.*
- 3 See European Values Study, 'Religion', available at <https://europeanvaluesstudy.eu/about-evs/> and <https://www.gesis.org/issp/modules/issp-modules-by-topic/religion>.
- 4 This mode of asking seems to produce in a higher proportion of 'no religion' than other standard survey questions (e.g., 'What is your religion?', 'What is your religious preference?' or 'What religion, if any, do you consider yourself as belonging to?'). This is perhaps because it implicitly signals the normalness of *not* having a religion, thus nudging a certain percentage of liminals to say no who might (equally honestly, for the reasons given above) answer a differently phrased question with a religious answer.
- 5 The material in this section draws on Bullock's *The Sociology of the Sunday Assembly: 'Belonging Without Believing' in a Post-Christian Context*. (2017), and on Bullock's and Herbert's 2018–19 Understanding Unbelief research entitled *Reaching for a New Sense of Connection*, which examined the nature and diversity of unbelief, practice and social connections amongst nonreligious millennials in six European countries (UK, Netherlands, Germany, Norway, Poland and Romania). We are grateful to Sanderson Jones (Sunday Assembly), Siri Sandberg (Norwegian Humanists), and Nina Sankari (KLF) for providing up-to-date figures and information about their respective organizations.
- 6 Proportionally London has, by far, the fewest 'nones' in Britain at 31 per cent, but the most in absolute terms (see Bullivant, 2017b: 3).
- 7 An impressive building in Central London assumed to be home to the oldest free-thinking organization in the world.
- 8 TED talks are influential videos devoted to spreading innovative ideas.
- 9 This figure is estimated from informal conversations accompanying the ethnography and semi-structured interviews.
- 10 At their height (2015) there were seventy congregations in eight different countries but the movement has seen both rapid rise and rapid fall.
- 11 Coming-of-age secular confirmations can also be found across Scandinavia and in Eastern Germany.
- 12 'Norwegian Humanist Youth', available at <https://humanistiskungdom.no/om-oss/english/>.
- 13 See Kazimierz Łyszczynski Foundation, available at <https://lyszczynski.com.pl/index.php/en/about-us/>.
- 14 See Women Vote Peace (2019), available at <https://www.wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Women-For-Peace-Publication-WILPF-Germany.pdf>.

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CHAPTER

## 32 Managing Religious Diversity in Europe

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### Abstract

Since the mid-twentieth century, religion in Europe has faced three inter-related trends: the waning of Christianity, increasing secularization, and rising levels of diversity stemming from growing globalization and changing migration patterns. As a result, all European states confront the same broad question: how to adapt existing church–state relations and norms of secularism to an extra-Christian religious diversity that the continent has not known before. At the same time, Europe features a ‘bewildering variety’ of political and institutional connections when it comes to the governance of religious diversity, reflecting different historical inheritances. To make sense of this, this chapter discusses these dynamics in relation to three processes: the *politicization*, *institutionalization*, and *securitization* of religion and divides its discussion into three confessional regions—a majority Protestant North-West, a majority Catholic South, and a majority Orthodox East—in order to analyse how, from their many different starting points, European states are addressing contemporary religious diversity.

**Keywords:** [politicization](#), [institutionalization](#), [securitization](#), [religious diversity](#), [governance](#), [Europe](#)

**Subject:** [History of Religion](#), [Religion](#)

**Series:** [Oxford Handbooks](#)

IN the course of European history, religion and politics have enjoyed a wide variety of linkages. As a result of state-building processes, demographic changes, and migration flows, Europe today hosts a ‘a bewildering variety’ of church–state relations (Davie, 2000: 15) as well as of legal, institutional, and political arrangements related to religion–state connections. This renders attempts to talk of a ‘European approach’ to the governance of religious diversity extremely difficult if not something of a fool’s errand. There are, nevertheless, common features that can be highlighted: the legal guarantee of basic religious freedoms, institutional connections, and the privileging of one or more religious traditions, for instance. Moreover, each of these features and their variations in type and degree owes something to distinctive political, institutional, and theological historical inheritances.

More recent trends related to globalization and migration have led not only to contemporary forms of religious diversity in Europe, but to different responses from European states to both a new European

context as well as national pressures. The increased and increasing religious pluralism has challenged or been seen to challenge both Christian and secular dominance as other faiths jostle for recognition. This has been occurring at the same time as institutional and political secularization, which is accompanied by the long-term fading of Christianity that can be observed across the continent, albeit with marked variations, and which shows no sign of reversing (Triandafyllidou and Magazzini, 2021).

p. 569 In some ways these trends might represent the ‘deterritorialization of religion’ —the reverse of the territorialization of religions represented by the Westphalian system (Knippenberg, 2007: 261)—except that the solutions adopted take nation–state form. Nearly every West European state has responded by emphasizing national integration and desiring, for instance, a national Islam: ‘French Islam’, not simply Islam in France. ↪ Also noteworthy is the fact that in cases concerning religious freedom, the European Court of Human Rights routinely defers to national understandings through the principle of the ‘margin of appreciation’, a mechanism which permits national and local sensitivities to be taken into account.

More recently, Muslim identity politics have become a particular concern for those in Europe hosting significant Muslim populations. Groups and controversies initially defined in terms of race or foreignness have come to be redefined in terms of religion; thus, the accommodation of Muslims has become the dominant issue in relation to multiculturalism and religious diversity (Modood, 2005, 2013 [2007]) and has also given it particular political characteristics. Two ‘political moments’ have been pivotal in this regard: the first is 1989, the year of the Rushdie affair in the UK and *l’affaire du foulard* in France, which marked a turning point in the presence of religion in the public sphere. The same year was also pivotal in the post-communist East, as it too opened up to greater religious diversity. The second moment is the ‘war on terror’ and responses to the threat of radical Islamism, especially since 9/11. The same concern has found a home in Eastern Europe, although the factors at play are rather different given their different historical trajectories —notably the presence of historic ethnic Muslim populations in Orthodox Europe as opposed to the negligible Muslim populations in Catholic and Protestant Eastern Europe.

Thus, all European states are balancing forms of majority privilege with the challenges raised by new and complex pluralism in contexts displaying similarities as well as important differences. Yet, from their different starting points and in their own ways, they face the same broad question: how to adapt existing church–state relations and norms of secularism to an extra-Christian religious diversity that the continent has not known before.

Different typologies for understanding how religious diversity in Europe is managed highlight alternately, historical–confessional character (Madeley, 2003; Knippenberg, 2007), the two-way relations between institutions and actors (Bader, 2009), and the ways in which religion is conceived and experienced with respect to legal interpretations (Ferrari, 2012). This chapter discusses the various ways in which the challenge of religious diversity is taken up through three related processes. First is the *politicization* of religion, in which religion becomes more directly involved as an issue in political debates (Ivanescu, 2010), and which is then related to processes of *institutionalization*, and *securitization*. Thus, the chapter draws out how important legal, institutional and cultural factors bear on the governance of religious diversity, especially as they relate to assertions and conceptions of nationhood in inclusive or exclusive terms.

p. 570 Recognizing the importance of historical trajectories, the analysis is organized into three geographical–confessional sections, Western Protestant, Southern Catholic, and Orthodox Eastern Europe,<sup>1</sup> in order to distinguish some general patterns. Any such ↪ division will necessarily elide degrees of complexity and exceptions. Poland, for example, is distinguished from the Orthodox East under Soviet communism by being majority Catholic, and France differs both from Western European states and other formerly dominant Catholic states in being the only European state (except Turkey) to explicitly state that it is secular in its constitution. Yet this allows a focus on broader patterns and trends in which the politicization of religion plays out across Europe today.

## The Majority Protestant North-West

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The outcomes of the Reformation and the Westphalian settlement in what became majority Protestant countries were close church–state relations and Protestant dominance. This was the case in the UK, the Nordic countries, and Germany. (It should be noted that Germany has historically had two recognized churches: Catholic and Protestant. In the home of the Reformation, it is, however, the Protestant Church that has historically fulfilled the position of the *Volkskirche* and has often been preferred by the state.) Historically, religious diversity meant Protestant Nonconformists and dissenters, Catholics, and Jews, who faced suppression and even persecution but who were gradually accommodated within the existing church–state frameworks. Yet the process begun in the Reformation and the forms of confession that emerged in this part of Europe have proved ‘more willing to accept the virtual privatization of religion, thus restricting its purview to matters of personal conscience and social morality’ (Madeley, 2003: 42; Bäckström, 2014). On the one hand then, is the decline in the position of Christian churches and significant loosening of historic ties with the state, and on the other, the increasing visibility of religion in the public sphere as a result of contemporary forms of religious diversity. Taken together, these two processes have highlighted how varying and complex connections between religion and politics persist despite increased separation, alongside renewed debates on the place of religion in society as a whole.

The religion–state connections found can be characterized as *moderate secularism*, which comprises five normative characteristics outlined by Tariq Modood (2017), and which bear on how religious diversity is managed. These are: (a) mutual autonomy, not mutual exclusion or one–sided control between state and church authority; (b) the recognition of religion as a public not just a private good; (c) the assumption that the national church(es) belong to the people and the country, not just to its members and clergy; (d) the recognition that the state may be involved in eliciting the public good that comes from organized religion, and is not there simply to protect the public good from dangers posed by organized religion; and (e) an awareness that the precise connections may take different forms in different times and places.

p. 571 At a legislative level, contemporary arrangements of mutual autonomy between states and churches are set constitutionally with, on the one hand, minimal if any state control over church affairs and religious matters such as doctrine, and on the other hand, the subordination of ecclesiastical authority to political control. Religious freedoms of belief and exercise are protected through enactments in national constitutional documents and through the European Convention on Human Rights. Despite a certain basic legal uniformity, however, how religious diversity is managed in terms of its public manifestation varies. To give but one example, although a general asymmetry between majority and minority persists, reflecting the historical inheritance of the Christian (mainly Protestant) churches, privileges and support are open to other faith organizations in the form of *recognition regimes*, through which minority faiths become *institutionalized* into existing legal and governance structures. This process forms a route to legitimacy, brings certain benefits, and represents a significant way in which religious diversity is managed.

In all these countries gaining recognition as a religious faith or worldview community (humanist or similar groups can gain the same status) comes with significant, although varying, amounts of state support (often financial) and a privileged position in service areas such as education and welfare. Indeed, in Germany, the Protestant and Catholic Churches, taken together, are the largest recipients of public money and providers of welfare services in the nation (Barker, 2000; Lewicki, 2014); and in the Nordic countries, the churches’ involvement in welfare increased following the financial crises in the 1990s and 2008 (Bäckström, 2014). In supporting religious groups in these ways, the state plays an important role in facilitating religious diversity and its presence in the public sphere and civil society. Furthermore, recognized religions can gain access to government as an interlocuter on various policy areas, and religious leaders can become important moral voices in debates and issues surrounding the public good.

Yet certain conditions must be met in order to gain recognition, and here historical–institutional inheritance plays a role in shaping and regulating if, how and when recognition status is attained. These conditions set the types of adaptations that minority faiths must meet in order to play a public role and, therefore, what public religion should look like. Among the Nordic countries, for example, Norway and Iceland have lower thresholds in comparison to Denmark for gaining recognition (Kühle *et al.*, 2018: 91). Denmark has a tiered system of privileges and benefits, with ‘recognized’ religions at the top, followed by ‘approved’ religious communities, with ‘religious societies’ at the bottom (Laegaard, 2012).

Common conditions for gaining such recognition include: having a certain number of members, having a representative body, having a degree of permanency in the country, embodying the values of the country, and not contravening public order. These requirements have meant that minority faiths have at times struggled to gain or benefit from recognition. In Germany, for example, the conditions of numbers and permanency, and the failure to organize diverse associations into umbrella organizations, have meant that Muslim groups have routinely had their applications denied. Moreover, applications and decisions about a religion’s status are made regionally and therefore vary. Just two Muslim groups currently have recognized (public corporation) status despite Islam being the third largest faith group after Catholicism and Protestantism.

p. 572 Minority faiths have, however, been able to gain a number of more *ad hoc* exemptions and accommodations in relation to general laws that indirectly discriminate against aspects of their faith. Absent from formal recognition in Germany, Muslim and Buddhist groups have found other ways of working within the existing structure of church–state relations and put in place *ad hoc* agreements with regional governments over, for instance, education (Körs, 2017). That said, some of these areas have become increasingly controversial. In the UK and Germany exemptions were gained for Muslims and Jews for halal and kosher slaughter. Conversely, there is no exemption for halal in Iceland, Sweden, Norway or, since 2014, in Denmark (Kühle *et al.*, 2018: 96).

One thing all these countries share is the (increasing) presence of Islam and Muslims; Islam now forms the second largest religion in the region, following Christianity, except in Iceland (Furseth, 2018: 292). Notably, Muslims feature prominently in and across the most controversial areas provoked by increased religious diversity, and particularly by religious ‘others’. Common and contentious issues that have become highly politicized include: religious signs and symbols (such as crucifixes and headscarves); buildings (notably mosques and minarets); noise (the *adhan*, for example); religious holidays (which Christians enjoy by historical inheritance); religious education; funeral rites; and religious law.

As a result, the institutionalization of Islam has gained particular focus. Germany has sought to engage with its Muslim communities through regular German Islam Conferences (*Deutsche Islam Konferenz*), the first of which took place in 2006. Representatives from public offices and Muslim communities and associations are invited to a national discussion on various issues relating to Muslims in Germany, with a focus on the promotion of a ‘German Islam’. The initiative was launched by Wolfgang Schäuble, the then Home Secretary who envisaged such meetings as ‘a genuine dialogue with Muslims in Germany, who no longer are a foreign population, but who have become an integral part of our society’ (quoted in Lewicki, 2014: 64). Yet problems of representation have been a particular issue for both the government and for Muslims themselves (Großbölting, 2017 [2013]: 237). Similar issues of institutionalization, nationalization and representation were highlighted in the UK following the Rushdie affair and the government’s calls for Muslims to identify an interlocuter and to speak ‘with one voice’. This eventually led to the founding of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) in 1997, which remains the largest and most significant body, although there are others claiming to represent diverse groups and demographics. Evident in these examples is the *politicization* of religion (Ivanescu, 2010), in which religion may form both the *subject* of political debate as well as an *object*, and where religious actors are invited to participate in political discussion concerning issues relating to religion.

As well as these state-led initiatives, religious minorities themselves have played an active role in reshaping relations between religion and the state, especially in foregrounding religion as an issue separate from 'race' and ethnicity. In the UK, for instance, the inclusion of a religion question in the England and Wales census since 2001 was largely a result of lobbying on the part of British Muslim organizations (Sherif, 2011). Part of the reshaping has been the development of inter-faith infrastructure at national and local levels, allowing inter-faith work to become a key aspect of how minority religions are supported. In fact, majority churches can be seen by minority faiths as important for public religion in face of greater secularization, with or without explicit ↪ political support from the majority church itself (Modood, 1997; Fetzer and Soper, 2005). This is by no means uniform, however, in so far as majority churches may continue to insist simultaneously on their own privileged position (Furseth *et al.*, 2018).

A further aspect of this politicization can be found in the charge that Muslims fail to accept the separation between religion and politics; thus, they become the 'un-liberal other' to the political cultures of European states and the place of religion within them (Mouritsen, 2006). This accusation underpins a number of prominent debates, including the Rushdie affair and those in Denmark prompted by two further high-profile incidents: the Danish cartoon affair, when the newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* published cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad in September 2005, and the murder of the Dutch film director Theo van Gogh, whose film, *Submission*, written by Ayaan Hirsi Ali, portrayed the sexual domination of Muslim women by Muslim men, and to which the Danish Liberal Party awarded its annual liberty prize. These events prompted protests from Muslims arguing that the depictions were offensive and Islamophobic (see various contributions in Modood *et al.*, 2006). Perceptions of the place and role of women in Islam as being out of step with a liberal society have attracted particular attention. In these controversies, the place of sharia councils in a secular society (see Modood, 2019: ch. 7) and debates over women's clothing such as the *hijab* and *niqab* have been prominent. Full-face veiling has been banned in some countries, for example Denmark and some regions of Germany.

In North-West Europe the politicization of religion has become closely related to the *securitization* of religion (especially Islam and its followers) as a result of state responses to acts and threats of terror. Government counter-terrorism programmes, such as Prevent in the UK, have been controversial in linking security agendas with those of cohesion and integration (O'Toole *et al.*, 2012, 2016), resulting in modes of securitized governance in the state's interactions with Muslims and Islamic organizations (see also Furseth, 2018). The conditionality of being the right kind of Muslims for institutional relations of 'state patronage', for example, is highlighted by the example of the MCB falling out of favour with the New Labour government when it failed to support the war in Afghanistan in 2001 (see McLoughlin, 2005).

## The Majority Catholic South

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As outlined in this chapter's introduction there are two important trends currently at work in Europe, namely the *increase in religious pluralism* resulting from immigration and *secularization*. Southern Europe is no exception to these trends, even though immigration is a comparatively recent phenomenon and, according to a 2018 survey by the Pew Research Center, people still tend to place more importance on religion in the Catholic South than they do in Protestant countries (Pew Research Center, 2018).

While institutional secularization and religious pluralism are nowadays a reality in the countries identified by Stein Rokkan and Hans Knippenberg as 'mono-confessional ↪ Roman-Catholic' (Rokkan, 1981; Knippenberg, 2007), it is impossible to grasp the politics and sociology of Southern Europe without taking into account the historical relationship between the Catholic Church and the state and its particular way of institutionalizing religion.

In the case of Spain, for example, the current legal and institutional arrangements owe much to both the history of Spanish nation building, which is deeply intertwined with that of the Catholic Church, as well as the more recent democratic transition following Franco's death in 1975. In 1980, the Religious Freedom Act was passed, codifying the freedom of thought and religion and defining the procedures by which the state might protect the individual and collective rights of religious minorities. The main feature of the current regulatory framework has to do with the fact that the Spanish legal system provides different types of recognition and of collaboration agreements with different religions (Ruiz Vieyetez, 2019).

The attempt to reconcile the Catholic Church's traditional privileges with secular and democratic constitutional principles resulted in a special arrangement that is made explicit at Article 16.3 of the 1978 Constitution, which singles out the Catholic Church by requiring the state to cooperate with it. Such cooperation is regulated by four Agreements signed in 1979 between the Spanish State and the Holy See, and which replaced the 1953 Concordat. The agreements, which cover legal matters; educational and cultural matters; economic matters; and religious assistance in the armed forces and the military service of the clergy, were incorporated into Spanish law as international treaties.

In regulatory terms, given that the Catholic Church had already signed the Agreements with the Spanish State as a privileged interlocutor in 1979, the 1980 Organic Law on Religious Freedom—that implements the constitutional provision for freedom of religion—focused on other religious groups. The law establishes the right to: (a) profess any religious belief; (b) take part in the liturgy of one's own faith, celebrate religious festivities, hold marriage ceremonies, receive decent burial, with no discrimination for reasons of religion; (c) choose religious and moral education in keeping with one's own convictions, in and outside the academic domain; and (d) meet or assemble publicly for religious purposes and form associations to undertake religious activities (Article 2, Organic Law on Religious Freedom, 1992).

In implementing the above-listed rights, the Organic Law established an institutional framework and a legal regime for religious organizations. The enjoyment of benefits of this regime, however, are conditional on religious organizations being entered in the Register of Religious Entities maintained by the General Directorate of Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Justice. In addition to being included in the General Directorate of Religious Affairs, cooperation agreements with the state require that a confession be deemed as being 'socially rooted' or 'clearly established' in the Spanish territory, which is defined as having 'influence in Spanish society, due to their domain or number of followers' (art. 7 Organic Law 7/1980).

p. 575 Based on such principles, three cooperation agreements between the Spanish State and other confessions—namely the Federation of Evangelical Religious Entities of Spain (FEREDE), the Federation of Jewish Communities of Spain (FJCE) and the Islamic Commission of Spain—were reached and approved one decade later, in 1992.

While the debate about religious symbols in the public space has not been politicized at the same level of controversy encountered in France or Belgium, the 2004 metro bombings in Madrid (perpetrated by al Qaeda) and the 2017 Barcelona attacks claimed by the Islamic State played an important role in raising Spanish policy makers' awareness of the country's increased and increasing Muslim population. That said, the securitization of religion has not been particularly strong in Spain and the response to violent extremism has pointed more towards prevention. The two relevant major policy actions taken at governmental level have been the creation of the Pluralism and Coexistence Foundation in 2004 and a Strategic Plan to Counter Violent Extremism in 2015 (revised in 2019). A number of obstacles, however, frustrated the coordination between regional and national security forces, particularly with respect to those regions with stronger claims to autonomy or independence (Catalunya and the Basque Country) and in which the local police force is seen with suspicion by the central government.

In France, the current regulatory framework enshrined in the 1958 Constitution is based on the 1905 law on church–state separation, which in turn refers to the 1789 *Declaration of the Rights of the Man and of the*



*Citizen*. With the principle of *laïcité* explicitly inscribed in Article 1 of its Constitution, the French state stands out as an example of a centralized state with a strong division between state and church. Yet regional and local difference also play a role, as can be seen in the Alsace–Moselle region, where Catholic religion is taught in schools and the salaries of the clergy are paid by the French state.

In terms of religious diversity, Muslim minorities have been present on French territory since the 1960s, in other words significantly earlier (in contemporary history) than in Italy or the Iberian Peninsula, stemming mainly from former colonies such as Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. The question of Islam as such began to emerge in French public discourse in the mid-1980s due to: strikes in the car industry in 1984 (which mixed working-class and Islamic mobilization); requests for foreign workers to have prayer rooms in public housing, and in designated places where Muslims have requested specific sections in cemeteries; the visibility of mosques in the urban landscape; and abattoirs and markets for halal meat. The headscarf issue, which began in 1989, has provoked an ongoing debate on the compatibility of Islam and republican values. Successive French governments have reacted to this situation with efforts to institutionalize Islam, seeking ways to manage it within the secular framework of the Republic.

Two interior ministers have tried to establish structures of dialogue and of representation. The first was Pierre Joxe, who in 1989 created the *Conseil de réflexion sur l'islam en France* (CORIF). The second was Nicolas Sarkozy, who in 2002 set up the *Conseil français du culte musulman* (CFCM). For many years, however, the institutional dialogue between the state and French Islam took place through a privileged partnership between the Ministry of the Interior and the Rector of the Great Mosque of Paris. These efforts to institutionalize the governance of Islam have not eliminated conflicts, notably those relating to headscarves at schools. That matter was eventually resolved by the law of 2004 which prohibited ostentatious religious clothing in schools, and which stressed or perhaps imposed secularism as a republican value amid continuing political controversy surrounding the issue (Wihtol de Wenden 2014).

In recent years—following a number of high-profile attacks linked to religiously attributed radicalization—a mix of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ approaches have been adopted to govern what is increasingly seen as a ‘problematic’ minority. The dominant framework towards religion in general, and religious minorities in particular, is one of securitization, as can be seen by the fact that the Bureau of Religious Affairs has been placed in the Ministry of the Interior.

In the case of Italy, it can be said that church–state relations are older than the state itself, with Rome only becoming part of Italy in 1870 and the country’s unification remaining incomplete until the end of the First World War. It should therefore come as no surprise that degrees of religiosity vary significantly between the north and the south. The presence of the Vatican, moreover, is still highly influential in the public sphere, in part as the result of the Holy See’s constant and successful adaptation to political change.

The governance of religion has been highly institutionalized as part of the Italian state’s efforts to maintain good relations with the Catholic Church following the transition to democracy and to a republican form of government in the aftermath of the Second World War. This resulted in the incorporation of the 1929 Lateran Pacts into the current Italian Constitution. Such Pacts were amended in 1947 to acknowledge the transition from a monarchy to a republican form of government, and were further revised in 1984 when Catholicism lost its status as the official state religion, but the system continues to see religion as a synonym of Catholicism. The power of initiating a dialogue with minority confessions, acknowledging and granting the religious rights associated with being a recognized confession, lies with the Central Directorate for Religious Affairs, under the Ministry of the Interior, which to date has not recognized Muslims in Italy, despite Islam comprising the largest religious minority in the country.

A telling controversy that provides a good example of the politicization of religion in society can be found in the *Lautsi v. Italy* case. The case was raised by Soile Tuulikki Lautsi, who complained about her children

being exposed to the Catholic crucifix in class while attending public school, which is supposed to be non-confessional, and asked for it to be removed from the classrooms. When the school in question declined to do this, the case went first to the regional administrative court of Veneto, then to the supreme administrative court and finally to the European Court of Human Rights. The final decision declared that the presence of the crucifix in public schools did not violate the principle of secularism, with the effect that Mrs. Lautsi lost the case. Particularly noteworthy is the reasoning on which the Italian government defended the status quo, claiming that the crucifix symbolized not a religious confession but rather Italian civilization, its historical roots and universal values.

p. 577 If this case is telling regarding the difficulty of disentangling religious and state matters, it should also be noted that there is no uniformity of application on this matter, as on most others. Thus, in public schools in regions or municipalities with a different ↪ political administration, there are no crucifixes in classrooms. Regional differences such as these in the interpretation of legal provisions underline the need to avoid broad generalizations about a country without taking into consideration sub-national realities.

Indeed, in order to understand the process of institutionalization and politicization of religious diversity management in Southern Europe, it is necessary to pay attention to how such issues are settled not only within each country but also at the local level, in different cities and regions. The different (and at times contradictory) interpretations put forward regarding the rights of religious minorities generate considerable legal insecurity. In Southern Europe, Davie's 'bewildering variety' exists not only between different states, but within them, particularly with regard to the degree of accommodation towards Muslim minorities. In the current legislative and administrative frameworks of religious governance in Portugal, Spain, Italy, and France alike, freedom of religion is officially ensured, but not all minority religions are tolerated in the same way. Different colonial legacies and national histories play a crucial role in this respect.

## The Majority Orthodox East

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In Eastern Orthodox countries, the situation both historically and today is different in important ways from the majority Catholic and Protestant regions. The institutional framework is characterized by the close bonds between Orthodox churches and their nations, but is of a different character to those described above. These bonds are an outcome of specific historical developments as well as being rooted in the ecclesiastical structures of Orthodox Christianity (Madeley, 2003; Kalkandjieva, 2011).

This close identification is underpinned by *autocephaly*, meaning that the head of the national church does not report to a higher-ranking bishop, and historically has come about for several reasons. On the one hand, the clergy remained closer to the communities they served through marrying within them and using the vernacular language; on the other, successive subjugations by outside powers, such as the Mongol and Ottoman Empires, had the effect of further strengthening this bond. At times this also resulted in the entwining of imperial with church law based on a theologically legitimated *symphony*, which 'assisted the spread of phylethism' (the conflation between church and nation) (Kalkandjieva, 2011: 595–6). In countries where the Orthodox Church is the majority church, the close connection between church, state, and nation and between religious and ethnic identity has important implications for religious diversity.

p. 578 A further historical difference (with the exception of Greece) was the hiatus in the bond between church and state that took place under soviet-led communism, when the churches were under the subjugation of the state and lost their property and most of their rights. In this part of Europe, the Westphalian principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* was implemented from a Marxist-Leninist viewpoint, accompanied by anti-religious policies. The 1929 Law on Religious Associations in the USSR permitted religious ↪ services to be held only in registered buildings with almost all other religious activity declared illegal; it was accompanied by strong

suppression and persecution—a situation that relaxed after 1950 although the law remained in effect until 1990 (Sarkissian, 2010: 479).

The strong secularization that frequently resulted has been an enduring legacy of this period. Yet the fall of communism also opened the door to greater religious freedom and in some cases to a religious revival among the population (Sarkissian, 2010) thus resulting in a strong politicization of religion. This occurred as the post-communist states adopted basic religious freedoms similar to those in the West (Flere, Lavrič, and Djordjević, 2017), with the effect that religious groups, which had been underground for several decades, began to make claims for legal legitimacy.

At the same time, however, the Orthodox churches reasserted their dominance in relationships with the state and towards minorities. Rather than religious diversity increasing, historical patterns of dominant ethnic churches—symphonically bonded to the state, with each legitimating the other—find a contemporary mirror, ensuring that levels of religious diversity remain low (Sarkissian, 2010). In contrast to the role majority churches can sometimes play in Western Europe, the role of the majority Orthodox Church can be a barrier rather than support or ally to minority faiths (Sarkissian, 2010). This represents a different form in which religion becomes politicized and also suggests the reverse process of the *religionization of politics*; that is, the increasing influence of religion on political life (Ivanescu, 2010).

In some of these countries the special position of the national Orthodox Church is written into the constitution, but even in those where it is not, government policies strongly favour the national Church (Sarkissian, 2010). The Bulgarian constitution states that ‘Eastern Orthodox Christianity shall be considered the traditional religion in the Republic of Bulgaria’ and similar mention can be found in the constitution of Georgia (Flere, Lavrič, and Djordjević, 2017). In Romania all religions are constitutionally separate from the state with a tiered system based on conditional criteria not too dissimilar from those found in some Western European countries. Religions are registered as either a religious denomination (enjoying state subsidies, support, dialogical partnership, and recognition in public life), a religious association (which comes with taxation privileges), or as a religious group (not requiring registration and not accorded such privileges) (Popa and Andreescu, 2017). Nevertheless, this has proved restrictive in practice as, ‘the Romanian Orthodox Church has assumed the position of a *dominant church in the state*’, remaining the privileged partner, albeit in a more pluralistic landscape (Flora, Szilagyi, and Roudometof, 2005: 37; see also Turcescu and Stan, 2014). The Serbian constitution, by contrast, prohibits the establishment of a state religion, although it does provide for special treatment for ‘traditional’ religions, of which there are seven with the Serbian Orthodox Church being the majority and dominant church.

p. 579 In Russia, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) dominates religious life in close partnership with the Russian state—a situation that helps the Church to secure its position in relation to Orthodox communities both in Russia and abroad, and enables the state to use Orthodoxy as a source of national ideology, despite the formal separation between them (Knox, 2005; Krindatch, 2006). Thus, while the state recognizes Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism as ‘traditional’ religions, it notes the ‘special contribution’ of Orthodoxy to the history, spirituality and culture of Russia (Sarkissian, 2010: 496); ‘non-traditional’ religious groups are much more limited (Filkina, 2018). A further example of such discrimination can be found in the discursive distinction between (proper) ‘Bulgarians’ (being Bulgarian Christians) and ‘Bulgarian citizens’ (being Bulgarian Turks, Roma, and Muslims) (Ghodsee, 2009; see also Ivanova, 2017). Thus, a degree of symphony between church and state very largely continues; indeed, Eastern Orthodox churches may regard forms of separation as a rupture of symphony that is incompatible with their Canon law (Kalkandjieva, 2011).

Stemming from these arrangements, government involvement in the regulation of religion has been higher in the post-communist Orthodox majority countries than in the post-communist Protestant and Catholic countries (Sarkissian, 2010: 482). This is the case on several indices, signalling a correspondingly strong institutionalization-cum-politicization of the governance of religion. Moreover, on the same indices, levels

of discrimination against minorities have also been higher in Orthodox majority countries (Sarkissian, 2010: 482). Notably, this is not limited to non-Christian religions and can even involve Orthodoxy itself—Orthodox churches other than the national one may find themselves restricted (Sarkissian, 2010: 496–8).

In relation to non-Christian minorities, the situation is rather different from those described in the sections above. In contrast with the West, majority Orthodox countries have a longer history of living with non-Christians, and policies have at times been less restrictive towards them than towards non-Orthodox Christians (Kalkandjieva, 2011: 610). That said, in the contemporary period granting recognition through processes of institutionalization to non-Christian religions with different and sometimes less developed institutional structures is a complex issue (Kalkandjieva, 2011: 611). The privileged position of Orthodox churches in relation to minorities also serves to limit religious diversity in important public areas and the life of the nation; state education, for example, is often predominantly under the purview of the majority Orthodox Church (Flora, Szilagyi, and Roudometof, 2005; Sarkissian, 2010).

Muslims make up significant minorities (in Russia and Bulgaria, for instance, Islam is the second largest religion after Orthodox Christianity), but these populations are ethnically diverse historic minorities rather than more recent migrant populations, although newer and alternative branches of Islam have emerged since the 1990s. Russia is a particular case where a number of regions in the North Caucasus are majority Muslim. Here Islam and Muslims are highly politicized and securitized, often associated with fractious relations over issues such as political autonomy. This comes into stark relief in relation to Chechnya, where ongoing conflict from the mid-1990s has dominated relations between the Russian state and the region. Interestingly, in 2007, and in defiance of Russian law, Chechen authorities made it mandatory for women to wear headscarves in public buildings.

p. 580 The politicization and securitization of Muslims in particular has also found expression in increasing restrictions, crackdowns on institutions and proselytizing, along with ↴ controversies over mosque building and Islamic dress for women. This is enhanced by the close and ethnically based bond between Orthodox church and state such that minorities are often seen as foreign, ‘other’, or even as enemies, despite their historical presence in the country, which further obstructs their ability to participate in civil society (Flora, Szilagyi, and Roudometof, 2005; Sarkissian, 2010; Kalkandjieva, 2011: 612; Ivanova, 2017). Bulgaria faced its own headscarf affair in 2006 when two girls were banned from their school for wearing the headscarf, a decision upheld by the Ministry of Education and a national anti-discrimination commission on grounds of gender equality and secularism (Ghodsee, 2009). There has also been a ban on face-covering veils in Russia’s Stavropol region (upheld by the Russian Supreme Court).

New (post-1989) religious movements and groups that have emerged as a result of nascent religious freedoms or globalization and migration processes can experience significant discrimination in post-communist Orthodox states. Following the fall of communism, the ROC used the emergent idiom of democracy to attack other religious organizations, especially those deemed ‘cults’ such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses, as part of an ‘anti-cult movement’ that restricted their ability to register and establish a legal status (Baran, 2006); in 2017 Russia’s Supreme Court declared them an extremist organization.<sup>2</sup> Minority faith groups, such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses and Baptists, have faced similar restrictions and interference in Romania and Bulgaria, frequently being seen as ‘disembedded’ from the territorial nation-state and therefore from the idea of the nation. This has also been the case for ‘new’ groups of Muslims and expressions of Islamic faith—perceptions supported at times by the traditional and recognized Islamic leadership in the country (Ghodsee, 2009; Popa and Andreescu, 2017).

## Conclusion

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In the three regions marked by three confessional-institutional legacies there are points of similarity as well as of contrast when it comes to managing religious diversity. The differences concern matters of degree on the one hand, and whether or not the situation in question (notably the nature and role of the dominant church) serves as a pathway or as a barrier to the inclusion of minority faiths on the other. Moreover, while there is evident variety *between* states at the national level, there is also variety *within* states at sub-national levels. In short, national institutional frameworks discover their local responses through the politicization and securitization of religious diversity in a wide variety of contexts.

Europe, then, might be seen in terms of three distinctive forces, which push and pull in different directions. In this situation, which of the following propositions might the connections between state and religion reflect?

- p. 581
- a) Christian churches are still privileged and Christianity or its legacy suffuses most national cultures and public spheres;
  - b) Many European countries are multi-faith; Islam often constitutes the second religion, while Christianity continues to decline even at the level of personal identification;
  - c) This long-term and accelerating secularization shows no sign of slowing down; indeed in some countries there is a majority of non-religious or 'nones'. (Modood, 2019: 98–101)

In significant ways historical inheritance provides the structures that minority faiths have to navigate as they seek inclusion in contemporary European nation-states and, perhaps more than inclusion, as they seek a role in shaping those societies as public actors alongside others. In this situation, one of the key questions about the future is what will be the permutations, the alliances, and the dynamics across this triangle. For example, will it take the form of Pope John Paul II's idea that the main dividing line is between religions, especially Abrahamic religions, and the non-religious? Or will it be more like that expressed by Pope Benedict, who saw Christianity and the secular tradition of Enlightenment as sharing the same conception of reason, from which Islam was excluded (Modood, 2019: 169–70)?

Europe is witnessing a paradox: religion continues to lose significance for individuals and society but is more present, sometimes assertively so, in the public sphere and so a growing object of unease and controversy. While in many cases, the latter has to do with the presence of Muslims, and especially of politically radical or socially conservative Islam, it also has to do with the fact that many Europeans think that religion should not be active in the public sphere at all.

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## Notes

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- 1   As it would not have been possible to cover the whole of Europe in a single chapter, we have omitted the Central European countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia). In addition, we do not specifically discuss Greece preferring to give visibility to the former communist Orthodox countries.
- 2   Despite the contrasting roles of the majority churches noted above, such a situation has not been without parallel in Western European countries (see, for example, Richardson, 2004).

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CHAPTER

## 33 The Baltic Countries

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### Abstract

The three Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) have a varied religious history. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, they were the last region of Europe to be Christianized. Today, they—and especially Estonia—are among the most secularized societies in the world. This is not only due to the Soviet past but also to Baltic German dominance at key moments in their history. While Lutheranism has dominated in the north (in Estonia and Latvia), the Roman Catholic Church is still the main religious player in the south (in Lithuania and parts of Latvia). Primarily due to Russian migration, the Orthodox Church also plays a significant role in Baltic affairs. There is, finally, a small but vibrant cluster of new religious movements, notably neo-pagan groups.

**Keywords:** [Estonia](#), [Latvia](#), [Lithuania](#), [Lutheran Church](#), [Roman Catholic Church](#), [Orthodox Church](#)

**Subject:** [History of Religion](#), [Religion](#)

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TOGETHER, the three Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania form the Baltic region. However, this is a relatively young region, which has only experienced a common history since 1917. Before then, there was an important division between the Lutheran north, which today is Estonia and most of Latvia, and the Catholic south, that is, the southern part of Latvia and Lithuania. In order to grasp the position of religion in the contemporary Baltic States, it is necessary to understand this historical division, in addition to the shared history of the region during the twentieth century. With this in mind, this chapter is divided into two main sections. The first looks at the various stages in the religious history of the Baltic region, from early modernity, when the Reformation had a very different impact in the northern and the southern parts of the region, to the post-war era, in which the region was part of the Soviet Union. The second part of the chapter takes a more systematic look at the different religious communities present in the Baltic region since the end of the Soviet Union, especially the Christian confessions: Catholics, Lutherans, and Orthodox. Each of them is analyzed with regard to the role it plays in society and on the political scene.

## Religion and state to 1917

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The Baltic region was the last part of Europe to be Christianized. Pope Celestin III called for a crusade to the eastern Baltic shores at the end of the twelfth century, naming the region *Terra Mariana*, land of Mary. Numerous knights from northern Germany joined this crusade, which was considered much less perilous than those to the Holy Land, since the Baltic population was relatively peaceful and only locally organized. The crusaders settled along the coastline of the northern part of the region, founding the stronghold of Riga at the mouth of the Daugava River in 1201. In the following centuries, the region was ruled as a loose confederation of bishoprics, which were directly subordinate to the Roman pontiff, territories of the Livonian (Teutonic) Order, as well as ↵ the independent city of Riga. The northern part of what today is Estonia belonged to the King of Denmark between 1219 and 1346. Importantly, in all these territories, the local feudal lords were German-speaking noblemen, who dominated the countryside including the local Estonian- and Latvian-speaking peasants. The cities were also predominantly German-speaking, as the city burghers were mainly descendants of the crusaders and settlers of the thirteenth century.

At the same time, further south and inland, non-Christian fiefdoms continued to rule the lands of what today is Lithuania. This region was not officially Christianized until 1386, when the Lithuanian chief Władysław II Jagiełło (Jogaila) (r. 1377–1401) accepted Christianity in order to marry the Polish Crown Princess and become King of Poland, creating the Polish-Lithuanian Empire. King Mindaugas (r. 1253–63) had been baptized over a century earlier, but he did not truly embrace Christianity and failed to spread it in his kingdom. Jogaila's decision to adopt the western form of Christianity was strategic, aimed at appeasing his arch-enemy, the Teutonic Order. However, the latter disputed the sincerity of the conversion and continued to subjugate Poland-Lithuania until the Battle of Grunwald in 1410, which initiated the demise of the Order. The whole of Lithuania was officially Christianized in 1413, although numerous pagan practices remained, especially in the countryside, as was the case in the Livonian Confederation to the north.

The Protestant Reformation and the wars between Poland-Lithuania, Sweden, and Muscovy from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries also influenced the religious composition of the region. Lutheran ideas very quickly spread in the north, starting in Riga, where a religious conflict similar to that in many German cities ended in a full victory of Lutheranism. Lutheranism quickly took hold in all cities in what is today Latvia and Estonia, while developments in the countryside are more difficult to assess. Mostly, the faith of the feudal lord decided what the faith of the peasants should be, although the latter were only expected to come to Sunday mass and otherwise defer to their feudal lords.

The (Catholic) Teutonic Order collapsed as a result of the Lutheran Reformation, leaving a power vacuum in the northern Baltic area. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which had remained Roman Catholic, seized the opportunity to conquer almost all of the region. The Swedish (Lutheran) Kingdom soon retaliated, however, and by 1621, what is today Estonia and the northern half of Latvia ended up under Swedish rule. The western part of Latvia (Courland) was an autonomous Lutheran duchy within Poland-Lithuania, whereas the south-eastern part (Latgale) was fully incorporated into the Commonwealth. During the crucial seventeenth century, in which the confessional cultures were formed, the areas under Swedish rule as well as the Duchy of Courland solidified their Lutheran identity, whereas the Lithuanian territories and Latgale developed a strong Roman Catholic character, not least because of Counter-Reformation efforts carried out by the Jesuits. This time, moreover, shaping a Christian identity did not stop at converting the nobility and city burghers, but included real attempts to reach the peasants with the Christian message.

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Thus by the time of the Great Northern Wars of the early eighteenth century, the division between the Protestant north and the Catholic south had cemented itself. The fact ↵ that, over the course of the century, the Russian Empire became the political ruler in all the Baltic region did not change this situation. The Swedish parts were ceded to Russia at the Treaty of Nystad in 1721, when the Baltic German nobility

capitulated and were granted full judicial, educational, and religious autonomy. The Polish-Lithuanian lands became part of Russia following the Polish partitions in the second half of the eighteenth century and were incorporated in the multinational and multi-religious empire as Catholic regions.

Under Russian rule, the two parts continued to develop rather differently. The Lutheran part of the Baltic region was considered an advanced part of the empire, and the Russian tsars recruited aristocrats from the Baltic German nobility for the modernization of the imperial administration. In turn, the Baltic Germans displayed an unflinching loyalty towards the tsar, who was seen as a protector, guaranteeing their local autonomy in the Baltic provinces. For the Catholic regions further south, none of this applied. The local aristocracy, mostly Polish, did not stand in high regard with the central imperial authorities and were considered troublemakers and enemies of the Orthodox Church, which was the ruling faith in the empire.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, this difference was further exacerbated. The increasing effort to consolidate the Russian Empire, including a focus on Orthodox Christianity as the state religion, affected each region differently. For the Lutheran Baltic provinces, the so-called Russification measures started with the new code of law from 1832, which for the first time weakened the monopoly of the Lutheran Church in the region and extended the prerogatives of the Orthodox Church. The new situation became clear when the combination of several different factors resulted in a mass conversion to Orthodoxy among Estonian and Latvian peasants in the 1840s. About 15 per cent of the peasant population of the Livland province—more than 100,000 Latvians and Estonians—became members of the Orthodox Church (Rimestad, 2014: 295). When they realized that the new faith did not markedly improve their material and spiritual well-being, not least because of hostility from the surrounding Lutherans, some wished to return to Lutheranism. However, that path was closed to them because of imperial law, which prohibited conversion away from the Orthodox Church. In the struggle that followed, both sides, for the first time, made real efforts to reach the souls of the peasants. At the same time, a moderate ‘education race’ ensued, which was easily won by the Lutherans, who commanded far more intellectual resources than the few Orthodox priests that were sent to the region. Over the course of the century, there were further conversion movements, or individual conversions, often with the aim of increasing social standing or career chances.

Another important development in the Lutheran Baltic provinces was the influence of the Moravian Brethren, a pietistic movement that emphasized personal piety and taught that ministry is open to all. The movement, based in Herrnhut in Saxony, had spread to the Baltic provinces in the eighteenth century (Talonen, 2001), where it focused on enlightening the Latvian and Estonian peasants. It had been outlawed several times as a danger to the local Lutheran monopoly, but survived nevertheless. In the aftermath of the mass conversion to Orthodoxy, the Moravian Brethren were integrated into the institutional Lutheran Church and deployed as the solution to its difficulties. There is a correlation between those areas where the Moravians were strong and where the conversion movement was weak and vice versa.

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In the Catholic, mostly Lithuanian areas, the Russification efforts were more direct. As a result of the Polish uprisings of 1830 and 1863, the Catholic Church was perceived as a danger to the empire and there were active efforts to ‘de-Polonize’ the population. Publication in Lithuanian with Latin script was prohibited and conversions to Orthodoxy were encouraged, albeit with little success. Unlike the Lutheran Church, whose headquarters were local, the Catholic Church contained an external point of reference, the pope in Rome. As such, it was more difficult for the Russian Empire to subjugate the Roman Catholic Church, although there was a plan to create a ‘Russian Catholic Church’ in the 1860s. As a result, the growth of the national movement among the Lithuanians included a strong identification with the Catholic faith (Streikus, 2012: 37–8). Among the Estonians and Latvians, the religious element in the national movement was much weaker, since Orthodoxy was decried as the ‘Russian’ faith and Lutheranism was seen as a ‘German’ one. Unable to use religious identity as a marker of nationality, the Estonians and Latvians focused instead on literature, language, and folklore. In the religious field, they more or less successfully played off the Russians and Germans against one another.

## Developments in the twentieth century

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In the end, the Germans were victorious, and in both Estonia and Latvia—the fledgling independent states that emerged after the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917—the ‘religious norm’ was Lutheranism. In Estonia, about 20 per cent of the population was Orthodox, but Orthodoxy was never seen as something Estonian; rather it remained stigmatized as the ‘Russian faith’ throughout the inter-war period. At the same time, however, the Orthodox faith was recognized at the political level as an integral part of Estonian society, and numerous high-ranking Estonian politicians were baptized in the Orthodox Church and even enjoyed Orthodox seminary education. Politically, the Estonian approach to religious pluralism was parity and equal rules for all.

Latvia was a more centralized country, where everything circled around the capital Riga. At the same time, the Latvian regions were more religiously diverse, especially the region of Latgale, which had been situated outside the Baltic German sphere of influence since the sixteenth century. By 1917, the region was a multi-religious melting pot, with a Catholic majority, but also a strong Orthodox community. Politically the Latvian approach to religion was very different from the Estonian one. At independence, only the Lutheran Church was recognized as a legitimate religious community. At the same time, in order to integrate the

p. 591 Latgale region in the new state, intensive efforts to regulate ↴ the role of the Catholic Church were undertaken, culminating in a Concordat in 1922. The Orthodox Church, on the other hand, was viewed as a remnant of the Russian Empire, which had no role to play in the independent Latvian State. The legalization of the Orthodox Church in Latvia came only in 1926, after its leader, Archbishop Jānis (Pommers) (1921–34), was elected to Parliament, where he remained until his assassination eight years later. Thus, instead of total parity, the religions in Latvia were recognized in bilateral agreements.

Lithuania was another case altogether. Since the historic capital of Vilnius belonged to the Polish Republic throughout the inter-war period, Lithuania was deprived of its eastern half. The truncated territory of the Lithuanian state was predominantly Roman Catholic, with only a few ethnically linked minority religions, such as the Russian Orthodox, the German Protestants, and the Jews. Moreover, in 1923 Lithuania annexed the Klaipėda region in the west as an autonomous region, which had previously belonged to East Prussia. This region had a strong Lutheran minority, but mainly among the German nobility. In spite of there being no law on minority religions in Lithuania throughout the inter-war period, the minorities themselves ‘did not feel a strong pressure either from the state authorities or from the [Catholic] Church’ (Streikus, 2012: 40).

The relationship between the political establishment and the Roman Catholic Church was strained because of the ‘Vilnius issue’. The 1925 Concordat between the Vatican and Poland established the Vilnius diocese within Poland, which enraged the Lithuanians. Moreover, the hitherto dominant Christian Democratic Party was replaced in government by anti-religious leftists in the spring of 1926. So when Antanas Smetona staged a *coup d’état* later in that year and Lithuania became the first Baltic State to establish quasi-authoritarian rule, most of the Catholic community welcomed the new authorities as more congenial (Streikus, 2012: 41). In January 1927, Lithuania obtained a Concordat, which gave the political authorities some leeway to control the Church—a prerogative that they happily used.

From 1934, the other two Baltic States also became quasi-authoritarian. The term ‘quasi-authoritarian’ is used because the rule was not as strict and repressive as in Germany or Italy, but the states were still under the authority of a single ruler without regard to the popular will. Both the Latvian leader Kārlis Ulmanis and the Estonian Konstantin Päts initiated programmes to strengthen national identity. In both cases, an emphasis was placed on ‘the Church’ but formulated in such a way that all Christian communities could feel addressed. Religious life as a whole was streamlined to fit the discourse of first and foremost serving the nation. During the two inter-war decades, the Baltic States developed similarly, and the idea of the three

states as a region appeared for the first time, although no full-scale regional cooperation went beyond the draft stage.

p. 592 The start of the Second World War constituted a new break in the history of the Baltic States. All three authoritarian leaders, while originally aiming to remain neutral in the war, were forced to accept Soviet annexations in 1940. Adolf Hitler had personally called on the German minority of the Baltic States to resettle in the Third Reich as part of the secret protocol added to the 1939 Nazi-Soviet Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, in which the ↪ Baltic States had been accorded to the Soviet sphere of influence. In 1941, Nazi Germany reneged on this pact and invaded the Baltic States, where they stayed until 1944, when the Soviet troops returned, this time for good. By the end, all three independent republics had been turned into Soviet Socialist Republics (SSR) within the Soviet Union. In consequence, the Lithuanian SSR had finally been reunited with Vilnius, its traditional capital, together with the surrounding territory.

The religious situation during the Second World War was chaotic and ever changing. The Germans, who were seen as liberators from the Soviet oppression, used this perception to pursue a political course that was friendly towards religion, but not too friendly. The Orthodox churches of Estonia and Latvia, which had separated from the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) in the inter-war period but were forcefully reunited in 1940, were able to re-emerge alongside the local branch of the ROC. This reflected a policy of divide and rule—many competing religious institutions would prevent united opposition to German rule—but the occupiers had no systematic or consistent religious policy.

This was different from the Soviet authorities, who were eager to eradicate religion as a factor in the life of the population. At the second approach of the Soviet Army in 1944, numerous religious actors fled the country, establishing exile churches. Throughout the Soviet era, there existed a strong Estonian Lutheran Church in Exile, based in Sweden, and a Latvian Lutheran Church in Exile in Germany. In addition, an Estonian Orthodox Church in Exile managed to survive in Sweden. The Catholic Lithuanians in exile did not establish separate ecclesiastical structures but organized in various forms. All of these exile churches denounced the Soviet regime's treatment of religion in their countries of origin; their role in the following decades was not without significance.

The Soviet attempts to eradicate the importance of religion focused on two aspects. First, the respective dominant religion always suffered stronger repression than minority religions. In the case of Estonia and Latvia, this meant the Lutheran Church. In Lithuania, it was the Catholic Church which endured the most (Kolarz, 1962: 204–13; 256–63). Second, the goal of the Soviets was to retain nominal freedom of religion, while removing all incentives to become or remain religious. This included a total ban on religious education in the school system and severe restrictions in extra-curricular opportunities for religious education, as well as the suppression of any religious activity outside designated places of worship. Moreover, each congregation had to register with the local authorities as a society of believers, and the local authorities were often able to refuse this registration on petty grounds. As a result, by the 1950s, religion had lost its social role in the Baltic SSRs. The Lutheran churches had been easily subjugated to Soviet-friendly functionaries, whereas the Catholic Church in Lithuania had retreated into isolation as a 'fortress under siege'. In short, religious life in the Baltic region came to a halt.

p. 593 Only the ROC registered a modest growth during the Soviet era, mainly because of ethnic Russian labour migrants from other parts of the Soviet Union as well as its perceived role in strengthening the impact of Russianness in the region. In all churches, the best way to achieve a position in the hierarchy, was through ↪ collaboration with the secret services (KGB), and they were all heavily compromised. The attempts by the exile church structures to criticize this state of affairs was only partly registered. In the late 1950s, a heated discussion erupted over whether to allow the Soviet Lutheran churches of Estonia and Latvia to become members of the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Foundation, with the exile churches being the most vocal opponents. In the end, the Soviet churches became members of both organizations,

where they officially denied any religious persecution in the Soviet Union and argued within the Soviet peace agenda. In private meetings with Western church leaders, the Soviet Estonian Bishop Jaan Kiivit was more honest, characterizing the situation of the church in Estonia as ‘grey’ —its members having learned to keep silent (Rohtmets, 2017).

It was only in the 1980s that the situation started to change. The development of religiously inspired subcultures in the Baltic States at the end of the 1970s preceded the policy changes initiated by Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev. Specifically, there emerged an underground intellectual movement interested in Asian spiritualities and pagan traditions that existed prior to Christianization, enmeshed with a clandestine revival of Catholic and Lutheran practices. By the time the Soviet Union collapsed and the Baltic States became independent again in 1991, the scene was set for a return of the religious actors. However, it is important to stress that apart from Lithuania, where the Catholic Church did play a small role opposing the Soviet regime (Streikus, 2012: 53), religion was not an important factor in the Baltic independence struggle (Vardys, 1987; Johnston, 1992; Grislis, 1996). Much more important was the tradition of national song festivals, which gained the upheavals in the Baltics the name of the ‘singing revolution’. In short, religious factors were marginal to this region throughout the twentieth century.

Following the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, religiosity once again became an accepted part of identity. All over the Baltic States, there was a religious resurgence immediately after independence, but it was short lived. These developments had slowed by the mid-1990s, with the effect that today Estonia is considered one of the most secularized states in the world, while the two other countries are not very different. There are important differences between the three major Christian confessions, however, which is why the remainder of this chapter looks at each of these in turn. A short section on other, non-Christian, religious expressions follows.

## The Catholic Church in the post-Soviet era

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The Catholic Church, which has been an integral part of national identity in Lithuania for centuries, has regained this role in present-day society. However, the attachment among the Lithuanians to the Catholic Church is at best symbolic and should be seen as part of a wider narrative. It is true that the Catholic Church dominates the religious field; ↴ conversely it is not able to extend its power into other social fields. Ingo Schröder uses the definition of hegemony by William Roseberry to describe the Lithuanian religious field: the Catholic Church provides ‘a common language or way of talking about social relationships that sets out the central terms around which and in terms of which contestation and struggle can occur’ (Schröder, 2012: 83). In other words, it is not possible to talk about religion in Lithuania without addressing the Roman Catholic Church—the elephant in the room. There is a degree of religious pluralism in Lithuania, but it is centred on the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church, then, is present in a variety of ways. For many Lithuanians, it is no more than a provider of religious services on specific occasions, such as marriage, baptism, and funerals. The reasons for this are numerous. Most importantly, the long period of political marginalization that the Church experienced during the Soviet years engendered a culture of suspicion and a siege mentality, making it difficult for the post-Soviet Church to reach out to an anti-religiously socialized population. According to Schröder, the Catholic Church’s post-Soviet revival was limited, primarily because of the Church’s lack of resources (Schröder, 2012: 84–7). Not only did it lack experience in dealing with a modern urban capitalist society, where religion was a legitimate part of civil society, but more importantly it lacked clergy, administration, and materials that would help urban populations to find a place in the Church. For most Lithuanians, the Church provides a repertoire of cultural knowledge and one plausible religious resource among others, but their knowledge of the principles of the Catholic faith is often rudimentary.



Since the turn of the millennium, this attitude is slowly evolving, as religious education in schools, as well as increased strategic thinking among church officials changes the way the Catholic Church situates itself in Lithuanian society (Schröder, 2012: 88–90). That said, Catholicism will never again be able to consider itself the faith of Lithuania, although the Catholic Church is the dominant actor in the religious field. Schröder terms Lithuania a ‘secular Catholic society’ to account for this internal contradiction. The distinction between ‘religion proper and alternative forms of healing, wellness, and enlightenment is becoming blurred and religion is becoming amalgamated into a much broader “field of symbolic manipulation”’ (Schröder, 2012: 94). In short, the situation of the Catholic Church in Lithuania is ambiguous. On the one hand, it serves as the point of reference for any discussion about religion, but on the other, it fails to appeal to the broad majority of Lithuanians as a faith. Nevertheless, according to the 2011 census, 77 per cent of the Lithuanian population (some 2.35 million people) identify as Roman Catholics.

p. 595 The Catholic Church in Latvia plays a similar role but on a much smaller scale. Catholicism is not the main religion in Latvia (25 per cent overall, — 430,000 people, according to the 2011 census). The official church membership for 2017 is even less (only 17.5 per cent, some 377,000 Latvians), but is higher in the eastern region of Latgale (65 per cent). In this region, the Church remains the principal marker of local (regional) identity, especially in the countryside. In Riga the Catholic Church also attracts a number of believers. Interestingly, the Catholic Church in Latvia seems to be more popular, in the sense of its closeness to the people, than the Lutheran Church. The visit of Pope Francis <sup>4</sup> in September 2018 was a great national event, happening as part of the 100th anniversary of Baltic independence, and was celebrated in Latvia as a public festival. At the open-air Mass at the pilgrimage site of Aglona, there were more than 20,000 participants, despite the rain.

Pope Francis also visited Estonia, even though the Catholic Church in Estonia is minuscule. According to the 2011 census, there are only 4,501 Catholics here (0.4 per cent of the population), most of whom are immigrants from countries with a Catholic majority, such as Lithuania and Poland. There is no ethnic Estonian Catholic priest, whereas the Catholic Church in both Lithuania and Latvia is led by a majority of local clergy.

## Post-Soviet developments in the Lutheran churches

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The Lutheran Church was traditionally the main church of both Estonian and Latvian societies, but it suffered more profoundly than the Catholic Church during the Soviet era because it was easier to instrumentalize for political gain. Like the Catholic revival in Lithuania, there was a revival of the Lutheran churches in Estonia and Latvia following independence in the early 1990s. This revival was facilitated by the material and symbolic support both churches enjoyed from their exile counterparts. The Estonian and Latvian Lutheran churches that had survived in exile welcomed the independence of their countries of origin. The reunion between the local Lutheran churches and their exile counterparts did not materialize, however, until 2010.

The religious revival of the early 1990s wore off quickly and, as already mentioned, Estonia is today considered one of the most secularized countries in the world (Ringvee, 2015: 154–5). The Lutheran part of Latvian society is equally secularized, but because of the significant Catholic minority, Latvia’s overall secularization is less pronounced. The Lutheran churches have not been able to achieve a similar status to the Catholic Church in Lithuania for several reasons. First, since religion has played a less important role historically for Estonian and Latvian identity, the national revival also took place largely without reference to religion. Second, the religious scene in both countries is more divided, as is generally the case in Protestant Christianity. The most zealous and charismatic religious actors tend to belong to more charismatic groups, whereas the Lutheran Church remains the default option for the less enthusiastic. And



as in many post-Soviet societies, the number of less committed Christians is small, due to the atheistic education and anti-religious propaganda of the Soviet period.

p. 596 Thus, the Lutheran churches in Estonia and Latvia never managed to become hegemonic religious actors in the Lithuanian sense but remained one option among many in civil society. They are nonetheless significant and play an active role in the political discourse of both countries, where they are acknowledged as important. The term 'cultural Lutheranism', which is applied to the Scandinavian countries, also fits in the Baltic case. The dominant culture and political attitudes are shaped by Protestant Christianity, but ↪ the twin processes of secularization and globalization have eroded the religious element of this attachment (Kilp, 2009).

Internally, the developments in the Lutheran churches of Estonia and Latvia have been characterized by controversies and conflicts. One of the most visible concerns the increasing conservatism of the Latvian Lutheran Church. While the Church accepted the ordination of women in 1975, the new primate, Archbishop Jānis Vanags (appointed in 1993), refused to implement this decision. At the time of writing (2020), Vanags remains the head of the Latvian Church, and at a synod meeting in 2016, the Church decided officially to revoke female ordination. This sparked international outrage, not least from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), which had warned against taking this step. The Latvian Lutheran Church no longer sees the LWF as a communion of churches, but rather as a forum of discussion for Lutherans. Its preferred international partner is the conservative Missouri Synod in the USA, although it has not yet joined the International Lutheran Council, which is the conservative counterpart to the LWF.

The Estonian Church has not displayed such conservative tendencies in its official decisions, but there are clearly pastors in this Church, who see a return to a 'pure' tradition as the only way forward. These are often disillusioned individuals, who cannot come to terms with the situation that arose after the collapse of communism. The appeal of an overly conservative church to the relatively large number of disillusioned citizens is, however, not very great. Conservative Christianity does not help the Lutheran churches escape further isolation, but rather reinforces it.

Numerically, the Lutheran Church is the religious home of about a tenth of the citizens of Estonia (around 150,000 people). In the Latvian case, it is difficult to estimate the number of Lutherans, as different statistics from the 2010s range from 12 to 34 per cent (250,000 to 709,000). A further 2 per cent of Estonians and 1.2 per cent of Latvians belong to other Protestant churches and sects. These relatively small overall percentages can be attributed to the fact that most inhabitants do not identify with any religion. Many Estonians and Latvians are areligious, in the sense that they have never consciously considered becoming member of a religious community, since religion does not figure in their everyday lives. There is no tradition of religious values within the family or school and very little religion in the public sphere. For example, when Pope Francis came to Estonia in September 2018, the visit was advertised as a special event, but its religious dimension was by no means the centre of media attention.

## The post-Soviet Baltic Orthodox Church

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p. 597 In the 2011 Estonian census, the Lutheran Church was not even the largest religious group, given that 16 per cent of the respondents chose to identify with the Orthodox ↪ Church. This relatively large percentage stems from the fact that the Russian minority in Estonia is more religious than the Estonian majority. For the Russians, Orthodox Christianity is one way to assert an ethnic identity in contradistinction to the dominant Estonian society. The same can be said about Latvia and Lithuania (Laukaitytė, 2014), where respectively 17 per cent and 4 per cent of the population identifies as Orthodox. This way, the Orthodox Church in all three Baltic States is generally perceived as a Russian phenomenon—an alien faith.

In both Estonia and Latvia, where a local Orthodox community has existed historically, there is a minority within the Orthodox Church that is ethnic Estonian or ethnic Latvian. In the Latvian case, this minority is hardly visible, as the Russian elements in the Church dominate (Runce and Avanesova, 2014). In the Estonian case, on the other hand, with the help of the Estonian Orthodox Church in Exile which had survived since the Second World War, there has been a revival of a local Orthodox tradition separate from the Russian element (Rimestad, 2014). This Estonian Church does not consider the Moscow Patriarchate its mother church but reports instead to the (Greek) Patriarchate of Constantinople (Istanbul). The decision by Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople to re-establish the Estonian Orthodox Church in 1996 engendered a temporary break between the two important Patriarchates of Constantinople and Moscow. The rift ended when the Patriarchates agreed to allow two parallel Orthodox structures in Estonia, a situation that is not provided for in Orthodox Canon law.

Thus, the great majority of the Orthodox believers in the Baltic States are part of the ROC. Their liturgies are celebrated in Church Slavonic and they follow the Julian calendar. The integration of the Russian minority into the Estonian and Latvian societies is a much-discussed subject, and the Orthodox Church is an important element in this. In parallel with the Russian Orthodox, there are Latvian Orthodox, and especially Estonian Orthodox, who celebrate their liturgy in the national language and try to differentiate themselves from the Russian presence. In the Estonian Church, this means using the Gregorian calendar for the liturgical year and introducing Byzantine- or Estonian-style liturgical music instead of Russian.

A religious group that is often mentioned in relation to the Baltic States are the Old Believers. This is a group that split from the ROC in the seventeenth century in protest against liturgical reform. The Old Believers fled persecution and settled beyond the Russian borders—in the Swedish Baltic Provinces at the time. They stayed there even after these regions became part of the Russian Empire and are now considered indigenous to the Baltic region. Especially the Estonians are eager to portray the Old Believer towns on the shores of Lake Peipsi bordering Russia as a tourist attraction, well worth visiting. The Old Believer community consists mainly of elderly ladies and is preserved as a folkloristic oddity. Only 0.2 per cent of Estonian citizens identify as Old Believers, fewer than 3,000 people. The communities in Latvia (2 per cent) and Lithuania (0.8 per cent), which survive primarily in the Latvian capital Riga and deep in the forests of the eastern regions are more active, though the Old Believer community prefers isolation and is relatively undemanding.

## Non-Christian communities in the Baltic region

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Alongside the Christian confessions, there are also small pockets of non-Christian communities in the Baltic States. The oldest of these are the Jews in Lithuania and Latvia. Baltic Jewry used to be quite wealthy and influential but was all but eradicated during the Second World War. Those who remain today represent less than 0.5 per cent of the population. These communities, all of which have working synagogues, consist almost exclusively of Russian Jews that settled in the region during the Soviet era.

Other non-Christian communities include the Muslim Tatars as well as the Karaites (a Jewish sect that recognizes only the Tanakh as authoritative, rejecting the Talmud) in Lithuania. Both groups were invited to Lithuania by Grand Duke Vytautas the Great (r. 1392–1430), and both were well integrated into Lithuanian society, while remaining religiously distinct. During the Soviet era, the groups were secularized, and the attempt to revive the Karaite religious identity was not very successful. Fewer than 500 Lithuanians identify as Karaites. The centuries living among Christians followed by the atheistic propaganda of the Soviet period have marginalized their religious distinctiveness, and they survive today mainly as a tourist asset. Islam has been more successful, with almost 3,000 Muslims in Lithuania (Račius, 2012). The Tatars that have kept their Muslim identity are becoming a minority, however, through migration and conversions. Interestingly,

the Baltic States have been almost unaffected by the waves of Muslim migration since the 1990s. Instead, the local Muslims hail from the Muslim parts of the former Soviet Union, such as Azerbaijan, Central Asia, or Tatarstan.

There are New Age and other new religious movements in the Baltic States, though these do not play an important role in society. There are also small communities of hippy Krishnaites, Satanists, and similar movements that occasionally create a media stir, but do not reflect any significant trends (Ališauskiene, 2012). Much more important is the attraction of esoteric practices that are then integrated into the everyday lives of non-believers, or even Catholic or Lutheran churchgoers. This trend, which is visible all over Europe, also exists in the Baltic States. A peculiar Baltic version of it is the attempt to reimagine Baltic pre-Christian religious traditions. Even though the Baltic region was the last part of Europe to be Christianized, there is little reliable information on pre-Christian beliefs and practices among the Baltic tribes, and the neo-pagan movements that have sprung up fuse what is known about Baltic traditions with South Asian, New Age, and esoteric elements, celebrating nature as a panentheistic deity. Most of these neo-pagan movements, called 'Romuva' in Lithuania, 'Dievturi' in Latvia, and 'Maausk' in Estonia, have roots in the early twentieth century, when such groups emerged as an alternative to 'Polish' Catholicism, 'German' Lutheranism, and 'Russian' Orthodoxy, as something genuinely Baltic (Strmiska, 2012; Stasulane and Ozoliņš, 2017). The members of these various very heterogenic groups are 'mainly urbanized literate people who have long ago lost their links with traditional peasant culture, commonly considered the last fortress of pre-Christian beliefs' (Shnirelman, 2002: 197). While the committed membership is relatively small, the underlying idea of neo-paganism enjoys latent support in the population, who see this kind of belief as more compatible with life in a secular society than institutionalized religion.

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## Conclusion

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The Baltic States, especially the northern, traditionally Lutheran part, are counted among the most secularized societies in Europe. This is due in part to the Lutheran Church lacking potential for national identification, which the Catholic Church possesses in the Lithuanian case. However, and more importantly, the forty-five years of being part of the Soviet Union, where religion was regarded as outdated and in need of eradication, have clearly influenced the way religion is seen today. Except for the national minorities, who often see in religion an important way of keeping their identity, religion does not play an important role in the everyday lives of most Baltic citizens. Politically, the three states treat religion differently. Lithuania has a three-tiered system of recognition, distinguishing between traditional, legally recognized, and non-recognized religious communities. In Latvia and Estonia, all religions are equal before the law, provided they have registered as religious communities with the state. There are attempts by the religious groups in all three states to influence the political scene, most notably in Latvia, but these attempts have not yet yielded any notable results.

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### CHAPTER

## 34 Central Europe

Árpád von Klimó

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### Abstract

Central Europe is still imagined as an area dominated by Christianity, for the most part the Catholic Church, in close alliance with Christian rulers who minimized the impact of both the Protestant Reformation and minorities such as Judaism. This idea rests, however, on an oversimplified picture of the religious history of the region. Recent research has shown that the reality was more complex, and that historians still know very little about what the overwhelming majority of people believed or how they practised their religion. Christianity has never completely monopolized the religious landscape of Central Europe and has itself been constantly changing. The history of Christianization, Reformation, empires, and nationalism present in Central Europe as well as state socialism, the Cold War and today's relative pluralism give an idea of this complexity.

**Keywords:** Central Europe, empires, nationalism, religion, history, Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, secularization

**Subject:** History of Religion, Religion

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CENTRAL Europe has experienced both major developments and major ruptures in its religious history, beginning with the Christianization of the region in the medieval period. Christianity itself, however, has been an open, continuously changing religion that absorbed earlier beliefs and practices and adapted to local and regional customs. Migrations often contributed to changes in religious practices. The situation at the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century is therefore very complex—broad generalizations are unlikely to be helpful.

The same is true in terms of geography. The meaning of 'Central Europe' has been contested since the concept was created in German intellectual circles as *Mitteuropa* in the nineteenth century (Delanty, 2019). For this chapter, a flexible and pragmatic understanding of the region is needed—one that enables appropriate conclusions to be drawn regarding both the history of religion and the current situation in the region. 'Central Europe', as understood here, includes the countries of Switzerland, the Czech Republic, and Austria in the west; Hungary and Slovakia in the east; Poland and the three Baltic states in the north; and Slovenia, Croatia, and the Adriatic Coast in the south. For the period before 1918, however, the western parts

of today's Ukraine, parts of northern Italy, and the regions that were formerly part of the Kingdom of Hungary, but are now in Serbia and Romania, are also covered, given that all of them were part of the Habsburg Empire. The inclusion of Switzerland and Austria overcomes the strict East–West distinction created by the Cold War. Indeed, religious reality today shows greater similarities between the more heterogeneous and secularized urban centres of Zürich, Prague, or Tallinn, as opposed to the more rural Swiss cantons and similar areas in eastern Hungary, Poland, or Slovakia.

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Since speculation began about the nature of Europe, Christianity has figured prominently as a mark of distinction, regardless of the fact that Christianity originated in the Middle East and has deep roots in Central Asia and Africa. Ironically, this (mis)understanding of Europe as the 'Christian continent' that has been popularized by missionaries and colonists since the early modern era, is still present today. It is true that the dominating institutions (that is, the monarchies, republics, and churches) were based for centuries on Christianity, but there was never a uniform, Christian idea of monarchy; the religious beliefs and practices of the average person and group—each within their own social and cultural environment—were, moreover, quite different. Furthermore, until the Holocaust, Central Europe was always marked by the presence of non-Christian minorities, most of all Jews. It is important to note finally that the image of 'Christian Europe' became a propaganda tool in the struggle with the Muslim Ottoman Empire—a tool that continues to resonate in twenty-first century debate.

This chapter is arranged chronologically. It begins with the Christianization of Central Europe and the rise of the Christian monarchies, and continues with an account of the Reformation and its aftermath. The third section finds its focus in the tensions between religion and nationalism from the nineteenth century to the twenty-first. A short conclusion underlines the continuing complexity of religious life in Central Europe.

## Christianization and the rise of Christian monarchies between the fifth and fifteenth centuries

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It was in the late fifteenth century that the monarchies in Central Europe finally defined themselves in some way or another as 'Christian states'. On the one hand this was the moment which marked the end of a long and complex process, but on the other it concealed a series of inner tensions: first between the states themselves, and second between the monarchs, the aristocratic and urban elites, and the papacy—conflicts that would break out again during the Reformation. Quite apart from this, the history of the Christianization of Central Europe very largely ignored the religious realities of the peoples that were subject to the Christian monarchs, simply assuming that they were all more or less believing and practising Christians since they had no other choice. Recent research, however, is challenging this image of religious uniformity. New concepts—such as religious 'hybridity'—have been proposed to understand better the complex process of religious transformation between late Antiquity and the Reformation in Europe. Christianization was 'a complex, active and extended process of interaction and negotiation by which Christianity mapped itself onto the inherited sacred topography of the pagan past' (Thomas, 2017: 318). In other words, ancient temples and other religious sites were not simply transformed into churches. Rather, Christianity itself was transformed in the process, drawing from Slavic, Germanic, Scandinavian, and Mediterranean religious influences (Christensen, Hammer, and Warburton, 2013). Central Europe was a vast area where older and newer religious beliefs and practices mixed with myriad local traditions. This plurality of beliefs and practices also had to do with the Ancient Romans' attitude towards the law. Because the Justinian Law Code treated all other religious associations outside the Roman Catholic Church as 'heretical', this—paradoxically—helped 'the religious diversity which was constituted by law' to survive 'in practice in the culture of the Middle Ages' (Kippenberg, 2008: 141).



p. 603 The Christianization of Central Europe was a slow movement of missionaries and their ideas and knowledge alongside the creation of new Christian monarchies, moving from south (the Roman Empire) to north (Poland and the Baltic region) and from west (the Britain and Ireland) to east (the western Slavic regions). The earliest bishoprics of Central Europe had already evolved in the fourth century in the context of the Christianization of the Roman Empire. Some of these early bishoprics, particularly in the Alpine regions, disappeared when the Roman Empire collapsed and when large-scale migration dramatically changed the political and cultural situation. One of the most important early seats of a bishop was Aquileia in what is today north-east Italy (near Venice) from where the Roman province of Noricum (a large part of today's Austria) was Christianized. Other bishops had their seats in the Roman provinces on the Adriatic Coast, for example in Potevium (Ptui, Slovenia) (Bratož, 1996). The oldest bishopric north of the Alps, going back to the fourth century and first mentioned in 451, is the seat of Curia Raetorum (Chur, Switzerland). During the sixth and seventh centuries, elites of incoming pagan groups took over Christianity. Examples are the Croats who settled at the Adriatic Coast in the seventh century, or the Slovenes who came in the eighth (Šeparović, 2013).

Before the eleventh century, Christianity was mostly restricted to the Mediterranean and north-western regions of Europe. Thereafter it was slowly brought eastward by monks from Britain and Ireland. In the south-east, the Byzantine Empire extended Christian ideas and institutions north through the Balkans. After the foundation of the Holy Roman Empire by Charlemagne around 800, new Christian monarchies emerged in the east, that is, Bohemia, Poland, and Hungary. The Holy Roman Empire introduced the new concept of political hegemony, legitimized and sacralized by the pope in Rome, but which rested on ancient Greek and Roman concepts and philosophies. The importance of papal recognition to stabilize statehood can be exemplified by the Croatian Duke Branimir (879) or the Hungarian King/St Stephen I (1000). Both attempted to gain a more independent position between the Holy Roman Empire and Byzantium (Györffy, 1994; Berend, 2007; Majnarić, 2018).

The Christianization of Hungary was distinctive because the country integrated Latin, Byzantine, and nomadic traditions throughout the medieval period, including significant Shamanistic religious minorities (Berend, 2018). An additional minority in the Christian monarchies was Judaism. Jews had lived in the Ancient Roman Empire since the second century BCE and their presence in Antiquity has left traces in many parts of Central Europe including today's Switzerland, Austria, Croatia, Hungary, and Slovenia. Jewish communities existed in the Christian kingdoms throughout the Middle Ages. Since the thirteenth century, pogroms and atrocities, but also economic opportunities, forced many Jews to move away from France and the Holy Roman Empire towards eastern Central Europe. Expulsions from Spain, Austria, and Hungary in the late fifteenth century strongly increased the Jewish population in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth which became the centre of Jewry in Europe (Chazan, 2018).

p. 604 Further north, Bohemia and Poland had been objects of the missionizing campaigns of the Carolingians since the late eighth century. Hence the bishops of Prague remained under the archbishops of Mainz until the fourteenth century, when Prague was raised to an archdiocese (Bagge, cited in Arnold, 2014: 118). The first Christian ruler of the Principality of Bohemia was Wenceslas in the early tenth century. The Polish Duke Mieszko I (r. 960–92) was baptized in 966. In Gniezno (Gnesen), Mieszko replaced the site of a local Slavic pagan cult with a church, which became a diocese, laying the foundation for the kingdom of Poland that was ruled by his son Bolesław the Brave (r. 992–1025). The last phase of the Christianization of the monarchies in Central Europe began with the Polish-Lithuanian agreement of 1385 that brought the Baltic region into the realm of Western Christianity.

Equally crucial to the evolution of a Christian Europe in the medieval period was the spread of monasteries. Monasteries were places of worship, Christian education, and centres of cultural activities and memory. They represented the essential link between elites and their institutions and the wider medieval society. At



the height of the Cistercian movement during the twelfth century, the order had more than 300 monasteries in Europe, mostly in the West, but also a number of abbeys in Central Europe.

Until the end of the Middle Ages, the Roman Church held a central position in the states and societies of Central Europe, in contrast to the Eastern and South-Eastern Orthodox areas. Most people were now materially affected by 'a long chain of ceremonies, traditions, customs, and observances, all of them Christian or Christianized' (Lucien Febvre, cited in Puff, 2018). The schism of 1054 that divided Western and Eastern Christianity contributed to a long-term alienation that was both political and theological, and which not only strengthened the inner cohesion of both denominations but the idea of a 'Latin' Central Europe. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the conflicts between the emperor and the pope on investiture—the right to nominate bishops—dramatically changed the relationship between empire and church as well as the character of religious institutions. As a consequence, the Church underwent radical reforms with the introduction of celibacy and an emphasis on the centrality of the sacraments in Christian life. This led to a more autonomous Church and the growing prestige of the papacy that would result in renewed political conflicts between popes and Christian rulers, particularly in the sixteenth century.

## Protestant Reformation, Catholic Reform and the Re-Catholicization of Habsburg Central Europe, sixteenth to eighteenth centuries

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p. 605 Most scholars consider the Protestant Reformation to be a phenomenon that took place mostly in the northern part of the Holy Roman Empire, that is in the German lands, Britain, North-Western Europe, and Scandinavia. These were the areas where ↴ most monarchies and the Dutch Republic evolved into Protestant states in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Consequently, Carlos Eire in his monumental book on the early modern reformations devotes only a few pages to Hungary and Poland (Eire, 2016: 313–14, 384). The conflicts between Catholics and Protestants and between the Protestant denominations had, however, drastic consequences for Central Europe; indeed, they changed the region's politics, society, and culture in ways that remain visible today, particularly when looking at the modern idea of the nation and how this was shaped in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The enormous impact of the Protestant Reformation on Central Europe was, to some extent, concealed by the successful re-Catholicization campaigns carried out by the Habsburgs in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which resulted in a somewhat superficial Catholic domination of most of the region. In short, we can speak of an age of *confessionalization*, in which the modern understanding of different Christian denominations was shaped. The process was closely related to the formation of nationhood in Central Europe in so far as many national communities were constructed around ethno-religious descriptions (Evans, 2011).

At the outset, ideas from the centres of reformation that lay at the north-western and western periphery of the area—Wittenberg, Basel, Geneva, Zürich, Nuremberg, Augsburg—spread quickly and successfully to the east and led to the creation of deeply rooted and local Protestant regions in areas such as Transylvania and eastern Hungary. Indeed, if one includes the Hussites, Central Europe was one of the earliest centres of pre-Reformation movements in the fifteenth century. As early as 1382, John Wycliffe's theological ideas circulated from Oxford to Prague in the context of a university exchange funded by the English King Richard II (r. 1377–99) who had married Princess Anne of Bohemia, daughter of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV (r. 1346–78), a Habsburg (Eire, 2016: 52). But even before that (in the 1350s), early translations of the bible into the Czech vernacular had appeared which became very important for the claims of various reformers that the Christian faith should be based on scripture alone (*The Wycliffite Bible*, 2016 [c.1382]: 78). The rector of the Charles University in Prague, Jan Hus (1369–1415), further developed Wycliffe's ideas and defended them at the Council of Constance in 1415 where he was condemned as a heretic and executed. Soon after, the Council called for a Crusade against Hussitism, a protest movement supported by a number of Bohemian nobles that reacted to Hus's death as a martyr. Similar ideas reached the Hungarian capital Buda, and

Hussite manifestos also appeared in Western Europe. Even Martin Luther ‘enthusiastically declared in 1521 [ ... ] he had been a Hussite all along without knowing it’ (Fudge, 2018: 1). Hus had become an icon of both Protestants (as martyr) and Catholics (as heretic). Hussitism extended as far as the southern regions of the Hungarian Kingdom (northern Serbia today); conversely the populations in northern Hungary (Slovakia) that suffered from Hussite warfare were more sceptical (Kovács, 2015). All that said, Hus’ ideas and Hussitism constituted neither a coherent religious movement nor a Czech ‘national ideology’ as was later claimed (Fudge, 2016).

p. 606 In the fifteenth century, humanists provided important ideas and impulses for the reform of the Church and a critique of medieval scholastic theology. For a number of ↵ Swiss cantons, independence from the Habsburg dynasty was gained in a series of wars between the mid-thirteenth to the mid-fifteenth century. And during that time, some cities had also secured increasing control over the nomination of priests and other clergy which would be essential when they created their own, reformed churches a century later. After the Council of Basel (1431–49), Swiss theologians founded the first Swiss university in the city in 1460; this became a centre of the new ideas, especially after 1521 when the humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam taught there. One of his pupils, Hulrych (Ulrich) Zwingli (1484–1531), a preacher in Zürich since 1519, started a radical reform programme in 1523, supported by the city council. In 1529, Zwingli and his followers broke with Luther who found their ideas too radical. Reformed forces also took over in Basel. Thus, the strong Swiss city-states became centres of Protestantism while the rural interior cantons remained Catholic. As in other parts of Central Europe (eastern Hungary and the Czech lands) Protestantism would later become a marker of regional and social (urban burghers and nobility) identity that would be reconstructed as ‘national’ in the nineteenth century.

Further north, Lutheranism dominated large areas of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia, the north-western parts of Poland and the Baltic regions, but Lutheran ideas had also conquered ground in Austria and the western parts of Hungary including Slovakia. At the same time the Bohemian Brethren, a group that had separated from the Hussites, as well as the Anabaptists and other smaller groups were active. When Ottoman troops defeated and killed King Louis II of Hungary and Bohemia in the Battle of Mohács in 1526, the Czech lands as well as the western part of Hungary and Croatia fell under the rule of the Habsburgs. The larger, eastern part of the kingdom of St Stephen, however, was occupied by Ottoman troops for the next 150 years. The Ottoman Empire allowed the establishment of Protestant churches, especially in the Principality of Transylvania which became a hotbed of Hungarian Calvinism and German-language (Saxon) Lutheranism, while also tolerating Catholicism (Keul, 2009).

After the Council of Trent (1545–63), a reformed Catholic Church began to reconstruct Catholicism, militantly attacking Protestant groups in Central Europe. With the help of the Habsburg rulers and through a combination of new institutions of higher learning and a renewal of popular forms of piety, as well as some violence, the Catholic Church gained back large parts of lost territories. Crucial in these campaigns was the new order of the Jesuits. One of the newly founded institutions was the University of what is today Trnava (Slovakia, Hungarian: Nagyszombat, German: Tyrnau). In 1774, a similar institute of higher learning became the University of Eger in north-eastern Hungary. The oldest Hungarian University in Pécs, founded 1367, was closed during the Ottoman occupation and only reopened under Emperor Joseph II in 1785. These Catholic universities were founded to counter a wave of Protestant institutions established by the new churches, for example the Calvinist (Reformed) college in Debrecen (in 1538), the so-called ‘Calvinist Rome’, or the Lutheran institutes of higher learning in Pápa and Sárospatak (1531).

p. 607 The re-Catholicization of Hungary could never be as successful as that in Bohemia because it collided with the much stronger institutions of the Hungarian nobility that ↵ insisted on the autonomy of the Hungarian kingdom. Here, Calvinists were ‘almost exclusively Magyars, and displayed a marked concern for education and for the use of the vernacular language, as evidenced by the pioneering encyclopaedist, János Apáczai Csere’ (Evans, 2011: 8). In addition, the Catholic Counter-Reformation of Bohemia had begun half a century

earlier, after the Battle of the White Mountain (1627) that ended the first phase of the Thirty Years' War. Having defeated Protestant forces, including Bohemian and Hungarian troops, Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II (r. 1619–37) outlawed Protestantism in the Habsburg realm. In the south, the Croatian diet had already banned Protestantism in 1606. The rejection of the 'foreign' beliefs of Protestants, Orthodox, Muslims, and others by the Croatian landed elites began to intensify in the late eighteenth century (Evans, 2011). Further north, in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569–1791) the majority of the aristocracy and gentry, who were mostly Calvinists, protected Protestants until the late seventeenth century, including the towns with Lutheran populations (the Warsaw Confederation of 1573).

Simultaneously, the religious landscape further east had begun to shift. During the sixteenth century, Orthodox churches, especially in Poland and Hungary, had undergone a revival with the founding of new schools and the spread of Orthodox writings through new printing presses. One of the results of this renewal was the 1463 founding of the Orthodox brotherhood in L'viv (Lemberg, western Ukraine). A century later, the Brotherhood was strengthened in opposition to the Union of Brest–Litovsk (1596) when a number of Eastern Orthodox churches declared their loyalty to the Roman pope, a move strongly encouraged by the Habsburg rulers, in an attempt to strengthen Catholicism. The creation of an Eastern Catholic (Uniate) Church would lead, in the centuries to come, to bitter conflicts between Rome and the Habsburg state on the one side, and the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian state on the other.

In general, all Christian denominations, Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox, attempted to increase their control over believers, often inspired by enlightenment ideas, and sometimes in cooperation with a modernizing and centralizing state (Lehner, 2016). They tried to improve the overall education of priests, introduced disciplinary tribunals in order to strengthen the juridical system of the churches, and printed and distributed catechisms to improve religious education. At the same time, 'reawakenings' strengthened or even reinvented Protestant communities, as did popular forms of piety and educational reforms among Catholic, Orthodox, and Jewish communities.

p. 608 In the Habsburg Empire, the ruling dynasty closely connected Counter–Reformation, Catholic reform, and other religious policies with the propaganda of the *Pietas Austriaca*, a broad concept of elite and popular beliefs and practices focusing on the Eucharist, the cult of the cross, of St Mary and other saints (Coreth, 2004). As a consequence, many movements that fought for more independence from Vienna, allied themselves or even identified with Protestantism, for example the Hungarian Calvinist nobility, or Eastern Orthodoxy in the case of the Serbian elites, and later with anti–clericalism. Influenced by ideas of the Enlightenment and by attempts to rationalize and centralize the empire, Empress Maria Theresa and her son Joseph II had introduced a series of reforms that resulted in a stricter state control of Catholic bishops, priests, ↴ seminaries, and parishes, severing ties between local churches and Rome. In the interest of a more 'rational' society and higher economic production, about 500 'unproductive', contemplative monasteries and convents were closed and a number of religious holidays abolished (Bowman, 1999). When Joseph II realized that the religious uniformity of the Habsburg Empire was 'an illusion', he launched the Edict of Toleration in 1782 that removed a number of restrictions on Protestants in the Habsburg Empire (Lehner, 2016: 55). At the same time, the Emperor also lifted some of the regulations that had constrained the life of Jews, although not in Galicia, where the majority of the Jewish population of the Empire lived. But the Emperor also used the funds raised by the closure of monastic orders to establish a large number of new Catholic parishes so that more believers had a chance to go to Mass on Sunday, since he regarded religious education as fundamental (Dickson 1993). Joseph's curbing of the transnational character of Catholicism might also have contributed to a heightened sense of nationality among Poles, Slovenes, Croats, and others in the Empire (Evans, 2011: 14). Similarly, the end of the persecution of heretics and witchcraft in the early eighteenth century contributed to the legalization of religious pluralism (Kippenberg, 2008: 143).

In the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Catholic Church had regained a hegemonic position. Attempts by the Russian Empress Catherine the Great in 1764 to strengthen the influence of Protestant nobles in the

Polish parliament were rejected by a majority of the Polish nobility 'as an insult to and degradation of the Holy Roman Catholic Faith' (Lukowski, 2010: 66). In the context of the partitions of Poland in the last third of the eighteenth century, Polish intellectuals striving for independence declared Catholicism to be a marker of 'Polishness', particularly in the Protestant Kingdom of Prussia and the Orthodox Russian Empire. This rather crude simplification of Polish realities would become common practice in the nineteenth century.

## Religious and national conflicts from the nineteenth century to the twenty-first

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### The role of religion in nineteenth-century nationalism

The period between the early nineteenth and the mid-twentieth century was marked by a profound transformation in the relationship between individuals, groups, and the state. The efforts to centralize the large empires in the eighteenth century had unintended consequences leading to the creation and growth of nationalist movements within these multinational and multicultural entities. For example, as the empires worked on the transformation of imperial subjects into active citizens (with more duties and more rights), by introducing censuses, population statistics, elections, press freedom, and other opportunities for political engagement, they necessarily contributed to the erosion of older, often hybrid, local identifications that had allowed people to use a variety of languages and to avoid clear-cut identifications with a specific ethnic or national group.

In the Habsburg Empire, the political structures and the dynamic democratization process that peaked in the 1907 introduction of universal male suffrage in the Austrian half of the Empire, provided distinct advantages to politicians who formulated popular claims in the language of nationalism. Even the Catholic and socialist parties had to adapt to this change (Judson, 2016). This does not mean, however, that the Habsburg Empire was 'doomed' to fail because it was a 'prison of the nations' as was claimed in the post-war propaganda of the new states created in 1918. In Switzerland, new nationalist ideas introduced, among others, by the Napoleonic armies in the late eighteenth century, also contributed to the creation of a modern national liberal myth: that of the confederation that had to be defended against the resistance of the mostly Catholic rural inner-Swiss cantons, a conflict that came to a head in the Civil War of 1847 (Zimmer, 2003).

In the context of this new nineteenth-century nationalism, religion played a crucial but complicated role. Nationalists transformed early modern ideas of specific religious denominations into modern national identities which inevitably contradicted more complex realities and clashed with the national indifference of many people. For this reason, nationalist activists needed to work hard to convince their target groups about how important their 'nationality' was. Religion was essential to this process because it had been part of group identities long before. In the case of Serbians and Romanians, the elites of their autocephalous Orthodox churches became major advocates for the creation of their respective nations. Many Romanian- or Serbian-speakers understood the churches as the centre, or core, of their group in states dominated and defined by other denominations or religions, as was the case in the Muslim Ottoman or the Catholic Habsburg Empires. Similarly, Hungarian Calvinism had become an essential marker of the identity of the eastern Hungarian gentry and urban middle classes. In the course of the nineteenth century, renewed conflicts with the imperial capital in Vienna contributed to a new, nationalist idea of Calvinism as the religion of the independent Hungarian nation, an idea that spread particularly after the defeat in the Revolutionary War of 1849. Hungarian Catholics responded to this by creating their own version of Catholic nationalism, based on the foundation of the state by King/St. Stephen. Hungarian Calvinists, however, would always question the 'Magyar-ness' of Catholicism because it had integrated many Hungarian citizens of Slovak or German background (Klimó, 2003).

Catholics increasingly engaged in nationalist discourses in the late nineteenth century, not always but often defending themselves from accusations of being loyal to an international church headed by the pope in Rome. Political and social conflicts 'proved' the validity of such national-religious concepts of identity. In the case of Catholic Slovenes or Orthodox Ruthenians (Ukrainians), priests often played a major role as part of the local intelligentsia among widely rural, partly illiterate populations. In Prague, the Czech historian František Palacký (1798–1876) helped to create the idea of Jan Hus as a religious leader who stood for national independence. After 1918, the religious aspects of Hus' life were pushed further into the background; increasingly he was declared a national hero (Fudge, 2016).

p. 610 However, the importance of nationalism for the transformation of the political landscape of the region in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries should not obscure the fact that most conflicts around religion at this time related not to nationalism but to the secularization of the state. In Switzerland as well as in Austria and Hungary, Catholics began to organize in associations, trade unions, and political parties and participated by the thousands in pilgrimages and other public events that were often regarded as manifestations against the national-liberal zeitgeist of the elites. Although the 'culture war' between the state and the Catholic Church in Austria-Hungary was never as violent or traumatic as it was in Prussia, in some parts of the Empire large numbers of Catholics were mobilized to protest against the introduction of a more secular elementary education, civil marriage, or the full emancipation of Jews (Clark and Kaiser, 2003). The Bishop of Linz, Franz Josef Rudigier (1853–84) brought Catholics from all over Lower Austria to the barricades against the new liberal government's reforms of 1868 (Voegler, 2006). It is equally clear that in both Austria and Hungary, Catholic political activism integrated antisemitic ideas about 'Jewish modernity' and capitalism into its ideology, not to mention the 'Jewish' influence in the professions, media, and modern urban culture (Hanebrink, 2006). Similar tendencies could be observed in Poland in 1918 where the identification between 'Polak' and 'Katolik' aimed to exclude categorically Protestants, Orthodox, and most of all Jews, from the new Polish nation-state (Porter, 2001). The geopolitical situation of the late 1930s, with the growing influence of Nazi Germany, also influenced Catholic activists in Slovakia and Croatia to join radical right-wing parties and later to engage in anti-Jewish violence and participate in the Holocaust. That said, Catholics were also numerous among those who defended or saved Jews (see Gilbert, 2010, for examples). The anti-Semites, moreover, were not the only ones to believe in the idea of modern Jewish urban culture, of which Budapest and Warsaw were the most impressive examples, with Jews representing 23 and 33 per cent of the population respectively (Gluck, 2016).

Finally, the nineteenth century also saw the rise of a new group of believers. These were radical secularists of various political orientations, a group that Todd Weir has called the 'fourth confession' after Catholics, Protestants, and Jews (Weir, 2014). Mostly radical liberals, democrats, socialists, or anarchists, these secularists shared a rejection of Christian and other religious beliefs. Interestingly, however, the decline of the traditional churches in Central Europe, particularly since the 1960s, did not lead to a noticeable strengthening of organized atheist groups of which some gained support from the communist regimes. Instead, it is religious pluralism and religious indifference that have gained ground in large parts of Central Europe.

## Religion and political ideologies in the aftermath of war and genocide

p. 611 After two world wars and a long political crisis, Central Europe lay in ruins. Even more profound and with longer-lasting consequences than the material damage was the ↵ moral collapse of European society largely because of the Holocaust in which Central Europeans played a significant part. The 'burden' of the systematic murder of more than six million people (Jews, Roma, and others) lingered on and would break out again a generation later right across the region, keeping in mind that the Cold War and the different political systems of East and West framed the discussion variously.

Hungary experienced an initial debate about the Holocaust in the mid-1960s when the media reported on the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem and the communist regime under János Kádár could not contain the fallout (Klimó, 2018). In a few short weeks in 1944, Adolf Eichmann had organized the murder of more than half a million Jews, with the help of Hungarian gendarmes, police, railway, and other state officials. Other Hungarians tried to rescue Jews, including the Catholic nun Margit Slachta, founder of the Order of the Sisters of Social Service. Poland experienced similar ambiguities: the country had been the victim of outrageous brutality by the German occupation regime but was also the site of the extermination camps. The debate, moreover, evolved over time. Since the 1980s, for example, as the communist dictatorships began to decline, Central Europeans have examined their involvement in the Nazi occupation in contrast to earlier narratives of victimhood and resistance. Austrians, for example, were divided about the position of President Waldheim who had loyally served the Nazi regime. And even Switzerland, a neutral country and a safe haven for refugees during the Second World War, was brought up short by a discussion of the country's banks and their role as clearing houses for the Nazi Empire.

It is hard to measure the impact of such debates on religion in Central Europe but in many cases the traditional role of the churches, especially the once-dominant Catholic Church, was seriously questioned because it had failed to become a force of resistance against National Socialism, racism, and nationalism during the dark years of the Holocaust. The church(es) had opposed modern liberal democracy, which they had often viewed as a threat to religion, tradition, and family, while liberals, socialists, and nationalists attacked the Catholic Church. Christian democracy tried to bridge the tension between these two extremes, representing both the social and cultural needs and the hopes of millions of Catholics in the new era of mass politics.

The details vary, however. In Hungary and Poland, the Catholic parties were outflanked by 'Christian' (which often meant non-Jewish) nationalism (Hanebrink, 2006). In Croatia, Slovenia, and Slovakia, Catholics were often mobilized in the name of a 'Catholic nation' against minorities and threats from outside such as Orthodox Serbs and Jews. In Austria, after the collapse of the German-Austrian Republic founded in 1918, Catholic groups were hoping to create a new Catholic 'Ständestaat' that would keep its distance from both Nazism and communism. This concept was also supported by Popes Pius XI and Pius XII who believed that Catholics should engage in their states, but in the form of 'Catholic Action' rather than a political party. The end of the Second World War, brought the chance for a new democratic beginning for Catholic and ecumenical political parties, but this was only possible in Austria where the Austrian People's Party became one of the two dominant parties together with the Socialists, and to a lesser extent in Switzerland, where the (mostly Catholic) Swiss People's Party became a major player. Similar developments were suppressed in the areas dominated by the Soviet Union and in communist Yugoslavia.

Only after 1989 could Christian democratic parties be reconstructed, but they were unable to acquire the same strength as they did in 1945. This was hardly surprising given the decline in organized religion all over Central Europe.

## Recent religious trends

The long-term decline of religious institutions, which has been dramatic in Europe since the second half of the twentieth century, and which distinguishes the continent from other parts of the world, went hand in hand with other social and cultural developments of that time: first industrialization, then urbanization, and finally individualization and pluralization. This, however, is not a linear trend and no one can predict how the relationship between society and religion in Europe will evolve in the future. In addition, a more detailed review of the mid-twentieth century reveals important counter-trends. Two world wars and the economic recession of the 1930s strongly undermined trust in the capacities of the modern state to protect its citizens, and when all other institutions collapsed at the end of the Second World War, it was the churches that provided shelter, food, and, most of all, moral comfort to many people. Religious practice soared and religious groups, for example the ecclesiastical orders and lay organizations, experienced a boom all over Europe. This surge of organized religion lasted until the 1960s, when a dramatic decline in membership set in, coinciding with the development of huge state-based welfare institutions. The latter were more influential in many ways than the systematic attempts to eradicate religion by communist authorities.

Secularizing trends in the communist part of Eastern Europe resulted from urbanization and the decline of village communities just as they did in the West. The brutal suppression of religious institutions that were regarded as bastions of reaction and conservatism, was, however, unique to communist countries even if the extent of the oppression varied from country to country. Possibly the most brutal repression happened in Hungary during the Stalinist period that finally ended in the 1960s, but only after the crushing of the anti-Stalinist revolution of 1956. In Hungary, almost all religious orders were dissolved in 1950. Only four were allowed to continue their activities legally, working mostly in education; about 3,000 nuns and monks were interned, and about 12,000 (of which 9,000 were women) were forced to leave their monasteries and convents. Only 950 men and 2,500 women religious were left in Hungary in 1989, at which point they were able to resume their activities (Bögre, 2010).

At the same time, the repressive communist policies strengthened the role that religion played in Western Cold War propaganda. In Austria and Switzerland, despite their neutrality, the differences between the democratic West and the godless communism of the East were accentuated. The split between East and West was not, however, total. The study of the impact of Vatican II on Catholics in communist countries has only recently begun, but it seems that Catholics in the East also discussed the Council. In addition, a number of groups flourished at the margins of society, as did the ecumenical dialogue (Fejérdy, 2016; Kosicki, 2016).

One point is abundantly clear: communism failed to suppress religion completely in the public sphere, permitting the Catholic Church, the Protestant churches and, most of all, the Orthodox churches in the East to regain some ground (Tomka, 2010). Ironically, communist state-funded atheism remained a small minority all over Central Europe. Instead, many young people have rediscovered both traditional as well as new forms of religion (for example Evangelicalism, Buddhism, and the New Age) as alternatives to both the failed beliefs of socialism and communism and to the new, cold world of capitalism. Pope John Paul II's visit to Poland in 1979 was a pivotal moment. Here the Catholic Church became the key institution not only to express opposition to the communist dictatorship but to embody a new Polish identity (Ramet, 2017: 3). Indeed, in retrospect, it seems as if the trend towards religion regaining strength was strongest in the chaotic 1990s, and has waned since. Even in Poland, church attendance has decreased and the percentage of Poles who say that they are 'religious in their own way' has risen from 32 to 52 per cent since 2000 (Ramet, 2017: 2). In the same period, however, traditional churches and religious education have regained both prestige and political support, especially in Croatia, Hungary, and Poland.

Religion in Central Europe today does not permit easy generalizations even in the former communist countries (Molteni, 2017). On the one hand, most of the Orthodox countries and, to a lesser extent, Catholic

strongholds such as Poland, Croatia, and Slovenia, as well as the more rural areas in Lithuania, Switzerland, or Austria, remain regions where religious belief and practice are widespread. On the other, Central Europe as a whole has seen belief and practice decrease. That said, the details vary. A Pew Survey of 2018 reveals considerable variation in religious practice: Croatia (44 per cent), Poland (40 per cent), Hungary (17 per cent), Austria (14 per cent), Czech Republic (8 per cent), Estonia (7 per cent) (Pew Research Center, 2018). Sabrina P. Ramet is correct to remind us, however, that these numbers do not say much about why people go or do not go to church. Both attendance and non-attendance at Mass can mean a variety of things which are not always related to belief (Ramet, 2017: 3). The decline in church attendance undoubtedly reflects processes of individualization and pluralization but is also related to migration and increased mobility (Pollack, Müller, and Pickel, 2012).

## Conclusion

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What is specific about religiosity in Central Europe? The region has always been heterogeneous and all attempts to unify the area under one creed or one institution have led only to increased conflict and further pluralization. Neither the Holy Roman Empire, nor the Habsburg dynasty, nor the communists were able to create uniformity. The peaceful integration of the region under the aegis of the European Union (only Switzerland is not a member) has not changed this situation. It is true that the EU prompts its members to respect religious toleration and to encourage the protection of minorities, but this does not always produce clarity in a complex world. Indeed, it sometimes results in counter-reactions, for example in the case of gay marriage. In short, religion in Central Europe continues to evolve and remains a fascinating topic for further research.



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### CHAPTER

## 35 France

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### Abstract

For fourteen centuries, French territory was an assemblage of Catholic and monarchical interests; the result is a deep-seated Catholic imprint which endures to this day though more so in some parts of France than in others. After the Revolution, France experimented with various forms of government which promoted a progressive separation between state and religion (meaning the Catholic Church). This was a long, difficult, and at times painful process resulting eventually in a Republic, in which the notion of *laïcité* became ever more important. Since the 1970s, the French population has become both increasingly indifferent to religion and increasingly diverse. Currently 40 per cent of the population has no religion, and Islam constitutes an important presence in the country. The growth of Islam has provoked a variety of reactions: accommodation, restriction, suspicion, and resentment.

**Keywords:** France, monarchy, Catholic Church, French Revolution, Republic, *laïcité*, religious indifference, Islam

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A useful image to illustrate the religious history of France is the expansion and contraction of an accordion. Between the sixth and eighteenth centuries, it seemed that there was an ever-expanding period of Catholic hegemony protected by an unbroken monarchical power. The result was a profound Catholicization of the societies and territories under the rule of the French Crown. A second, much shorter period of contraction followed, between the late eighteenth century and the late 1960s, which began after the French Revolution and the disruption it caused. Post-Revolution France set in motion the progressive disentanglement of the state from the Catholic establishment, transitioning from a restricted system of state-financed religions to the implementation of *laïcité*. The nationwide transition to *laïcité*, however, was not easily accomplished and was strongly opposed by reluctant Catholics during the twentieth century.

From the 1960s, the de-Catholicization (both institutional and cultural) of French society was accelerated by declining religious practice. During the 1970s and 1980s, however, just as *laïcité* seemed finally to be gaining some stability, a new religious pluralism asserted itself, resulting from immigration and new converts. The system of *laïcité*, though at times conflictual, was generally successful in its attempts to open

a market in religion. That said, French society today seems less tolerant and more divided, with some social classes and particular minority communities feeling under attack (Fourquet, 2019). The fragmentation of Islam, a growing tendency towards radicalization, as well as the threat of international terrorism, have provoked both political polarization and populist reactions.

This chapter covers the various stages in this turbulent story.

## Catholic hegemony in pre-revolutionary France

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At the time of the Barbarian invasions, the Latin-speaking Gauls were mostly Roman Christians. Already present in Roman Gallia Belgica, were pagan Frankish tribes, united under King Clovis (r. 481–511), who conquered the pagan Alaman and Arian Visigoth territories. Clovis absorbed the Burgundian kingdom through his marriage to Princess Clotilda and converted to Catholicism. He was baptized by St Remigius, the Gallo-Roman Bishop of Reims, along with 3,000 Franks. From this moment onwards, the link between the Catholic clergy and Frankish power endured for centuries. The Jews who lived in the kingdom were expelled in 533 and 633. In the early eighth century, Charles de Herstal, also called Charles Martel (r. 718–41), Duke of the Franks, was successful in quelling the Arab-Moroccan raids in the duchy of Aquitaine and won the Battle of Poitiers in 732. Martel's son, Pippin the Short (r. 751–68), became King of the Franks and continued his father's campaigns to impede Muslim settlement in the south. He was the first Catholic king to be ritually crowned and anointed with holy oil. Pippin's son, Karl (Charles I the Great) (Charlemagne) (r. 768–814), continued to expand the Frankish kingdom beyond the Rhine and the Alps, converting by force the still-pagan eastern Germanic tribes. Three centuries after the collapse of the western Roman Empire, Charles negotiated his imperial coronation, in Rome itself, by Pope Leo III (795–816), who was indebted to him after Frankish military forces had defeated the Arian Lombards in Italy (800).

The Emperor Charlemagne organized his rather scattered empire within an entirely Catholic framework (Chelini, 2010). In 843, his territory was broken into three separate kingdoms and shared between his grandsons: western Francia became the Kingdom of France in the late tenth century, when Hugues Capet (r. 987–96), Duke of the Franks, was crowned as successor to the last Carolingian king. Eastern Francia became Germany when its king was crowned by the pope as Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Middle Francia did not last long and fell apart into three smaller kingdoms in 855: Lothringia, Provence, and Italy. Unlike his German counterpart, the French king never contested papal sovereignty over the princes. And from the tenth to the twelfth centuries the Church itself became financially without equal; under French feudalism its substantial revenues were generated from church tax, estates, and fiefdoms.

A remarkable monastic expansion began during the tenth century. The abbey at Cluny, founded in 910, became the centre of 1,400 monasteries, both inside and outside France (Iogna-Prat et al, 2013). Cîteaux, founded at the end of the eleventh century, controlled 2,000 monasteries, reawakening the Benedictine tradition and competing with the Cluniac order (Pacaud, 2013). Cistercian monks spread the Gregorian Reform and focused on reclaiming the Church's lands from secular feudal lords. Cistercian architecture, moreover, was soon adapted for use in churches and cathedrals, becoming known as 'romanesque'. And it was the Cistercian Abbot of Clairvaux, Bernard de Fontaine (1090–1153), who called for the Second Crusade in 1145 at the behest of Pope Eugene III (1145–53).

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By the thirteenth century, France was a close ally of the papacy, permitting the free establishment of the first universities and building dozens of cathedrals, in an original French style, termed 'gothic' by the Renaissance painter Raphael. Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) called Philip Augustus (r. 1180–1223) his 'favourite son'. Louis IX (r. 1226–70), the archetype par excellence of the good king, was canonized by Boniface VIII (1294–1303) a few years after his death. This rather-too-close relationship also displayed a darker side. As the military arm of the Church, the French king obeyed the papal call to 'crusade' against the

heretics in his own kingdom. Waldensians in Languedoc and Cathars in the vicinity of Toulouse and Albi, were hunted down by the forces of the king and the Inquisition, led by the Abbot of Cîteaux, Arnaud Amaury (d. 1225). Those who refused to repent were burned at the stake. The prosperous Languedoc Jews, who until then had been left in peace unlike their co-religionists in the north of France, faced Inquisitorial suspicion, book burnings, and sporadic massacres (Iancu-Agou, 2014: 155–68). They were expelled anew, from the north in 1256 and 1306, and from the south in 1322.

The ‘mystical alliance’ between pope and king ended in the early fourteenth century. Taxes, conflicts, and Inquisitorial abuses by the king (among them the destruction of the powerful Templars in order to seize their lands) as well as a renewed desire for independent sovereignty contributed to the disunity. One century later, during the Western Schism, Charles VII (r. 1422–61) aligned with the Council of Basel, which sought to re-establish conciliar authority over the Church—itself increasingly overshadowed by growing papal control. The royal edict entitled *Pragmatic Sanction* established the Gallican Church’s autonomy in 1438 under the king’s supervision. In 1516, the young King Francis (François) I (r. 1515–47), obtained from Pope Leo X (1513–21), the privilege of nominating bishops in his kingdom (enshrined by the Concordat of Bologna), after his military victory at the 1515 Battle of Marignano against Swiss troops allied with the papacy.

In the early sixteenth century, Italian Humanist ideas penetrated the country, particularly in Paris, in large part due to well-known and well-respected scholars such as Erasmus of Rotterdam (c.1469–1536) and Lefèvre d’Étaples (c.1455–c.1536). Lefèvre, who translated the Bible into French, tried out the new ‘evangelical’ form of lay piety (originating in the Germanic Swiss territories) which incorporated group bible reading and discussion. His friend Guillaume Briçonnet, Bishop of Meaux (1516–34), set up one such group in his diocese called the *Cénacle de Meaux*. The *Cénacle* was soon accused of Lutheran heresy, as in the meantime, the Reformation had made its way into French universities. Lutheran books had been immediately condemned and banned. The *Cénacle de Meaux* was forced to disband. Despite the ban, the Lutheran influence, coming from Switzerland, continued to grow until 1534 when a poster criticizing the Catholic mass was affixed to the door of the royal chamber itself, provoking immediate and ruthless repression. A decade later, the members of the *Cénacle de Meaux* were burned at the stake. Under Henry II (r. 1547–59), persecution would continue relentlessly.

p. 620 Lutheranism had virtually disappeared when the Calvinist Reformation came to prominence in France, via Geneva, where a former *Cénacle* member, Jean (John) Calvin (1509–1564), having fled royal repression, was successful in imposing his ecclesiastical ordinances in 1541. The Calvinist Reformation touched all social classes in the areas of Normandy, Poitou, and Languedoc, as well as eastern and northern cities. Spreading to the nobility and the royal cousins in the 1560s, the Reformation’s success provoked two opposing clans competing for the crown: one Catholic and one Protestant. Civil war broke out, replete with barbaric violence and several fragile peace edicts, during which Protestants were granted the right to worship as well as the protection of a few sanctuary cities. In August 1572, a royal wedding at Notre-Dame de Paris between the Protestant heir of Navarre and the king’s daughter turned into a bloodbath, a comprehensive massacre of the city’s Protestants. In total, 4,000 people perished in the St Bartholomew’s Day massacre. After twenty years of unrelenting war, Henry, King of Navarre, became the sole heir of the French throne. Spain supported the Catholic faction refusing Henry’s dynastic legitimacy. But Henry renounced his Protestant faith and was crowned as Henry IV (r. 1589–1610) with resumed Catholic pomp and ceremony. In 1598, Henry IV promulgated an edict of religious toleration known as the Edict of Nantes. A remarkable hiatus in what had otherwise been systemic and very French intolerance, this edict allowed French Protestants to live peacefully under the protection of the law, in stark contrast to the expulsion of the last Jews from the south, when Provence was passed to the French king at the end of the fifteenth century, almost one hundred years earlier.



The Edict of Nantes, however, was repealed in 1685 by Henry IV's grandson, the great Louis XIV (r. 1643–1715). Banned from worshipping under the penalty of imprisonment, forced labour in the galleys, or death, Protestants were forced to convert or risk the confiscation of their property and the loss of their children's legal legitimacy. French Protestants fled the kingdom en masse, despite the prohibition to do so: 250,000 took refuge abroad (Baubérot and Carbonnier-Burkard, 2016). Their fate after 1685 was the mark of a renewed symbiosis between the French monarchy and the Catholic Church. The new Bourbon dynasty established a Christ-like mysticism, helping to create new religious orders and supervising the compulsory evangelization of both free and enslaved colonial populations. Movements of devotional piety flourished, such as the *humanisme dévôt* with its ideal of the *honnête homme* and the quietist movement especially popular among bourgeois women. This flattering picture was soon disrupted by the rigorous dissent of the Jansenism movement, inspired by Jansenius (Cornelius Jansen) (1585–1638), Rector of Louvain University. Jansenism was so vigorous at the turn of the eighteenth century that the king endorsed a papal condemnation, which had not been permitted for nearly two centuries, in order to stop it. The major Jansenist threat had barely been neutralized when it was replaced by the challenges of the Enlightenment which used satire, brochures, and clandestine tracts to shape the first-ever articulation of French public opinion, asserting that political tyranny worked together with the oppression of conscience to impede human progress (McManners, 1998). The battle for the freedom of thought began in the middle of the eighteenth century, following the censoring of both the publishers and authors of the first volumes of Diderot's *Encyclopédie*. Conflict between the Church, the censorship of the state, and the Enlightenment thinkers reached a crisis point in the 1760s. Voltaire's *Dictionnaire philosophique*, which compiled a list of objections formulated against Christianity and religion in general, was subsequently condemned by the parliament.

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## From revolution to the implementation of *laïcité*

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In 1789, the symbiotic relationship between Catholicism and the monarchy did not appear to be under threat when the king summoned the *Etats généraux* (Estates General) to avoid bankruptcy. But divorce quickly ensued when the Estates General renamed itself the *Assemblée nationale*, effectively igniting the Revolution. During the night of 4 August, the self-proclaimed deputies voted to abolish tax privileges for the Church and the nobility. Reflecting the deist affinities of many of the deputies, the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*, published on 26 August 1789, did not refer to God in the Preamble, referring instead to a 'Supreme Being'. Article 10 introduced the principle of freedom of opinion, including religious opinion. Because of this article, and that on civil equality, Protestants, and Jews of the newly acquired Alsace and Lorraine territories, became French citizens in December 1789.

The nationalization of the Church's property in September 1789 was designed to discharge the state from bankruptcy by selling off the Church's patrimony. In exchange, the deputies committed the state to accept the financial burden of clergy salaries as well as religious charities and schooling. In order to organize this public funding, the newly founded Assembly voted to pass the law on the *Civil Constitution of the Clergy* in November 1790, ending the thousand-year administrative autonomy of the Church in France. New dioceses and civil elections for priests and bishops were established. Now considered as public servants, each priest had to take an oath to uphold the national constitution. The enforcement of the law was tumultuous but uneven. Certain territories refused even to organize the local clergy elections. And most of the clergy refused to be elected and to swear allegiance to the new regime. In the end, only the elected priests, referred to as *jureurs*, remained in their parishes. The resistant priests, *non-jureurs*, were forced into exile or became clandestine. After several amendments to the aforementioned law, *non-jureur* priests who were caught were executed. In the long term, the areas that hid *non-jureur* priests would eventually correspond to those areas exhibiting sustained Catholic religious practice and right-wing voting patterns from the nineteenth to the middle of the twentieth century (Tackett, 1988).



In the autumn of 1793, the Jacobin deputies took over the National Convention imposing the Reign of Terror through the leadership of the Committee of Public Safety which served as an emergency provisional government. The Gregorian calendar was replaced with a new republican calendar in which the year 1789 was replaced by the republican year 1. Christian festivals were replaced by substitute holidays, the Latin organization of week and month was replaced by three ten-day weeks per month. Municipalities renamed their streets, children received new revolutionary names, while places of worship and religious symbols were partially destroyed, and the great men of the past were ceremonially reburied at the deconsecrated Pantheon in Paris (Vovelle, 1988). Dechristianization policies also took on the clergy directly, encouraging

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priests to resign and then marry. Some 3,000 *non-jureur* priests were guillotined. The revolutionary army, moreover, ensured that dechristianization spread from Paris towards the east, the centre, and the Rhône Valley (Tackett, 2017).

On coming to power in November 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte inherited a confused and painful religious situation. He sought to restore civil peace by immediately favouring the reopening of churches and the return of *non-jureur* priests. Then, he reopened negotiations with the pope in order to reunite the state-sanctioned and clandestine churches and to restore Catholic worship, culminating in the Concordat of Paris on 15 July 1801. Napoleon unilaterally added the 'Organic articles' governing worship, which impeded direct papal control over the French Church and sanctioned two Protestant churches, the Lutherans and the Reformed. The loi d'avril 1802 established the French system of state-sanctioned churches, which would later expand to include the Jews in 1808; this arrangement lasted right through the nineteenth century to 1905 (Chantin, 2010).

At the end of the Napoleonic Empire in 1814, what became known as the *restauration* did not reconstitute an absolute Catholic monarchy. It was true that Article 5 asserted Catholicism as the state religion, but Article 6 affirmed religious freedom and did not challenge the system of state-sanctioned churches. It further encouraged the flourishing of Catholic missions both domestically and throughout the colonial territories led by specialized missionary societies. Under Charles X (r. 1824–30), clerical pressure increased in schools and universities with the re-establishment of religious orders such as the Jesuits. And unlike his predecessor, Charles X opted to be crowned at Reims, reviving traditionalist ritual—a gesture that provoked widespread criticism, inspiring in turn opposition to the regime (Brejon de Lavergnée and Tort, 2012).

In July 1830, a short re-eruption of the Revolution characterized by anti-Catholic violence brought the ransacking of Notre-Dame in Paris, the exiling of many bishops, and the renewed persecution of priests, but gave birth eventually to a liberal and constitutional monarchy. And though the 'July Monarchy' was by no means Catholic, it did allow a religious *modus vivendi*, permitting active Catholicism on the one hand, but eliminating state entanglement with Catholicism on the other.

The 1848 revolution which established the Second Republic, was surprisingly free from anticlericalism. Priests agreed to bless the 'trees of liberty' that symbolized the new regime and encouraged parishioners to vote (the new republic had granted universal male suffrage). In so doing, they ensured conservative success at the parliamentary elections of April 1848. Thus, the first French president ever elected, Prince Charles-Louis Napoléon Bonaparte (r. 1848–52; Napoleon III from 1852), appeared almost king-like, even indeed as the saviour of the pope. In 1849, he sent the French army to reinstate Pius IX (1846–78) in Rome, who had been driven out by an insurrectional and short-lived Roman Republic. French Catholics rallied around the Prince-President's *coup d'état* in December 1851. The resulting regime of the Second Empire, proclaimed on 2 December 1852, relied heavily on the Catholic Church for official and military ceremonies, education, and social services and in return, dramatically increased the budgets for clergy and the construction of churches. Notre-Dame was entirely restored.

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The new alliance started to deteriorate in 1859, when the self-proclaimed Emperor Napoleon III (1852–70) allowed the seizure of the Papal States by the Kingdom of Piedmont, which sought Italian unification.

French Catholics upheld the pope's protest and once again turned their attention to the idea of papal supremacy. This movement of papal support on the part of French Catholics is known as Ultramontanism. It favoured reactionary Catholicism in a brief period of Catholic domination over French society during the nascent and uncertain Third Republic, following the Prussian defeat of the Second Empire (1870–1), a moment when Catholic forces enjoyed the support of a series of conservative republican governments. The number of priests had never been so high, and the religious orders went through an extraordinary period of expansion, with the missionary orders in the growing empire attracting thousands of would-be missionaries (Prudhomme, 2004).

As the 1880s approached, Catholicism was so dominant that the republicans mobilized all their potential supporters for the 1879 elections (from left-wing radicals to moderate centrists) behind the idea of separating state and church, in an effort to curtail Catholic control and make way for 'modern' values. It was at this point that the concept of *laïcité* began to emerge, which helped to facilitate republican unity. Republicans not only gained power but retained it until the First World War. They oriented their secular agenda primarily towards public education. In 1881, republican leader Jules Ferry (1832–93), Minister of Education, created the public primary school system, which was free, compulsory, and very soon secular, meaning the exclusion of religious education and the retention of moral values. More secularizing measures followed during the next decade: the elimination of prayers at the opening of assemblies, the ending of military presence at religious processions, the establishment of public nursing in hospitals, the transfer of cemeteries from religious to municipal administration, the regulation of church bells and religious processions in urban areas, the possibility of civil divorce, and the end of clerical exemption from military service. Only the growing missionary orders escaped this attack on the Church's influence, because they indirectly served the interest of French imperialism. Republicans also favoured Catholic settlement in the colonies using the Concordat mechanism in French Algeria. In October 1870, they integrated Algerian Jews into this system, a move which gave Sephardi Jews French citizenship. In contrast, French colonial expansion, which now included Muslim territories in North, Sahelian, and sub-Saharan Africa (as well as millions of Buddhists in Indochina), implied the unilateral religious supervision of the state. In short, France was policing its colonial religions (Vermeren, 2016).

At home, Catholics lost any remaining political influence during the 1890s. They were too attached to the monarchical cause and too disdainful of the republic's electoral system to regain any advantage. In the 1889 elections, their reckless support of the vacuous General Boulanger, champion of all things anti-republican, failed dismally. And from that point on, Catholics mostly chose to support the false accusations of Captain Dreyfus, simply because he was a Jewish officer. Catholic anti-Semitism, growing since the 1870s (Birnbäum, 1994), coincided with a new and strong nationalist fervour, which was previously a republican trait. Victorious in the June 1899 elections, the republicans were ready to end altogether the legal privileges of Catholics, as well as to abolish the 1801 Concordat (Baubérot, 2017).

In 1901, the new republican coalition adopted a definitive law which protected the freedom of religious associations but excluded Catholic orders from any associative status. The law obliged religious orders to ask for authorization, which would be granted on a case-by-case basis. In 1902, Émile Combes (as Head of Government from 1902 to 1905), forbade the submission of all applications from the orders. Following this decision, thousands of their members were exiled. The fight against the religious orders continued with the 1904 law prohibiting any religious congregation to teach (Sorrel, 2003). Again, thousands of male and female religious were exiled abroad or fled throughout the empire, where the law was not applied (Cabanel and Durand, 2005). Ending the Napoleonic Concordat was the next step pursued by both socialist and radical republicans. The radical Aristide Briand (1862–1932), supported by socialist leader Jean Jaurès (1859–1914), tried to ensure that the law was moderate and liberal, in part inspired by the American system (Bellon, 2016). Since the 1905 law of separation, France has been a secular republic.

## The French secular republic and the regime of *laïcité*, 1905–2005

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The early twentieth century was a time of adaptation on the part of both state and church as the transition to legal secularism, or *laïcité*, began to assert itself after nearly fourteen centuries of close entanglement.

The first step in this transition was the implementation of the law, which was largely unproblematic for the Protestant and Jewish minorities, yet seemingly impossible for Catholics, who were hostile to the ending of the Concordat regime, patrimonial transfer, and to the new system of classifying religious organizations as *associations*. In February 1906, the inventory of church property, as required by the 1905 law, provoked monumental demonstrations in Paris and riots in rural France, with some casualties in Flanders. The papal encyclical *Vehementer Nos* (1906) denounced the principle of separation and the administrative label of religious *associations*. The new Assembly of the French bishops endorsed the papal condemnation but, in a gesture of accommodation, proposed to adapt the Catholic organizational structure to the legal framework of religious *associations*. This idea was immediately rejected by Rome. Aristide Briand, then Minister of Public Instruction and Worship, sought to calm tensions by ending inventories and allowing Catholic worship to continue in the churches. The laws of 1907 and 1908 reaffirmed the right to freedom of worship. Briand confirmed, nevertheless, that the Catholic patrimony would remain state property if no Catholic *associations* were created to claim it (Portier, 2016).

p. 625 As France entered the First World War, appeasement transformed into a sacred union. Republicans and Catholics shared the same patriotism against Germany. Quarrels between the two ceased, exiled monks returned home to enlist, and the Minister of the Interior suspended the 1901 and 1904 laws against the Catholic orders. Despite rumours that Pope Benedict XV (1914–22) favoured the German and Austrian empires, the proximity and spiritual support of the priests in the trenches, as well as outside them (with anxious families), encouraged reconciliation. Ardent and expressive patriotism, fostered by the Church, fuelled a widespread, albeit temporary, return to the pews. In the aftermath of the conflict, this sacred union appeared to continue; the 1919 elections marked a victory for the Bloc national coalition, which united the centre and moderate right wings. In the absence of radical republicans in the government, the Archbishop of Paris, known for his willingness to find common ground, gave support to *laïcité*, provided freedom of conscience was truly respected. The Church was actively involved in holding public services in honour of fallen soldiers. In 1920, Joan of Arc (d. 1431) was declared a Saint—the second Patron Saint of France after Mary. Throughout the 1920s, many beatifications and canonizations honoured French (and often female) citizens, such as Bernadette (Soubirous) of Lourdes (1844–79) and Thérèse of Lisieux (1873–97), who were already immensely popular; at the same time veneration of Mary became more common.

For his part, Aristide Briand, as the new Head of Government, convinced the Chambre des députés and the Senate to restore diplomatic relations with the Holy See in 1921. As a sign of reciprocal goodwill, Rome agreed to inform the French State of its appointment choices for new bishops, who could in turn, articulate agreement or objection. Pope Pius XI (1922–39), through the papal encyclical *Maximam Gravissimamque* (1924), conceded that the creation of diocesan *associations* was a good solution, so long as they remained under the authority of the bishop. The French highest jurisdiction, the Conseil d'Etat, confirmed the legality of those *associations*. In clear contradiction to the 1905 law, Catholic churches built before 1905 were not returned to the *associations*, an agreement that still endures. Today, Catholic buildings built before 1905 are public property and are maintained by municipalities, departments, and the Ministry of Culture. When the temporarily German territories of Alsace and Moselle were legally returned to France, the standing Napoleonic Concordat was preserved, and is still applied today.

Open Catholic accommodation by the Bloc national provoked in turn a mobilization of the republican left which returned to power in 1924 (the Cartel des gauches). However, the much-expected crisis never happened. Despite its desire to do so, the left-wing government did not break off diplomatic relations with

the Vatican; nor did it impose the 1905 law (that is, *laïcité*) on Alsace–Moselle. At the end of the 1920s, the pope moved to improve church–state relations in secular France in order to manage, as best as possible, the new freedom of the French Church. Specifically, he opposed the strong national–royalist movement known as *Action française*, which claimed to represent the Catholic voice. The papal opposition undermined the dominant position of intransigent Catholics and facilitated, in the following years, a rapprochement between Catholics and the republic. Christian-inspired democrats, intellectuals, and theologians theorized on the separation of church and state and the freedom of religion and worked to incorporate human rights and democracy into Catholic political culture. In 1936, the Front populaire, representing a decidedly secular coalition, did not stir up anticlerical hatred, despite the events that had taken place just two years earlier involving anti-republican, openly anti-Semitic extreme right-wing groups. A radical republican and eventual Head of Government, Édouard Daladier, sought the support of the episcopate in the anxious months leading up to the outbreak of the Second World War. He wanted once again to invoke a sense of national unity. This sort of ‘gentleman’s agreement’ at the elite level of government did much to reconcile lingering differences surrounding the secularization of public education. L’Ecole laïque, with its undeniable success, maintained its revolutionary and emancipatory culture against what it saw as the Catholic machine. Radical and socialist wings remained united because of their shared anticlericalism. Catholics, on their side, constantly demanded the financial support of their educational infrastructure, a favour which they never obtained.

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After the collapse of the French military and armistice agreement with Germany in June 1940, the National Revolution came into being. The elderly and popular Marshal Philippe Pétain (1856–1951) was vested with full constitutional powers by the last and quickly dissolved republican parliament. Also called the Vichy regime, this new and dictatorial government led a country half-occupied by German troops and under Gestapo supervision. It immediately challenged republican values and the French Revolutionary heritage, which was held responsible for the defeat. It abolished political parties and trade unions. In its early days, the Vichy regime enjoyed considerable public support, due to Marshal Pétain’s reputation, particularly in the Catholic areas in eastern France. French bishops declared loyalty to the regime, committing to pray for the national recovery promised by the government. But popular and Catholic support declined as Vichy’s open collaboration with the German occupation progressed. That said, the Vichy regime adopted measures that favoured the Catholic Church concerning the authorization of Catholic orders (reduced to simple registration by the Conseil d’Etat) and school vouchers for Catholic children. Mother’s Day was declared a national holiday.

From July 1940 until its dissolution, the Vichy regime enacted discriminatory legislation against Jews: they were ousted from public office and banned from high-profile professions. Naturalized Jews lost their citizenship. Foreign Jews were locked up in internment camps and sent to Germany in French trains (1941). Vichy created a special Department for Jewish Affairs, which registered the entire Jewish population (October 1941). With these lists and the help of police and local officials (1942), Vichy developed a deportation policy designed to please the Germans, which would last until the Allied landings (Paxton and Marrus, 1981). The Jewish population, which once before had been almost annihilated by royal decree in 1394, returned to France by way of the Germany after the Revolution. It began to grow with the incorporation of Sephardic Jews, who were granted French citizenship in 1870 and with Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe and Germany from the late nineteenth century to the 1930s. French Jews, with long-held or recently granted citizenship, as well as Jewish refugees from Germany would be decimated by the Vichy regime’s complicity with the Nazi genocide: only 2,500 of the 75,700 Jews deported to concentration camps survived, the rest hid or managed to escape from France.

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At the end of the war, a provisional government was set up, led by General de Gaulle. The republican regime was de facto restored without further debate, and the favours given to Catholics by the Vichy regime failed to provoke anti-Catholic revenge. Despite the episcopate’s declaration of loyalty at the beginning of Vichy,

the bishops' commitment had been less than unanimous. Many of them, notably the bishops of Toulouse, Lyon, and Paris, had denounced the regime's abuses and had protected the free press and underground resistance. Nevertheless, Rome agreed to replace the entire episcopate at General de Gaulle's request. More generally, Catholic resistance had equalled communist resistance in every way. Its commitment allowed Catholic leaders to assume positions of responsibility in the provisional government and its new administration, ensuring their undeniable legitimacy. The new secular-Catholic party, the Popular Republican Movement (*Le Mouvement Républicain Populaire*), received 25 per cent of the post-war vote. It won power from the two other governing parties (the radical republicans and the socialists) at the beginning of the Fourth Republic (1946). The three parties agreed to proceed by removing communist and the (young) Gaullist parties from power—a gesture that challenged both the constitution and the Atlanticist choice of the French during the nascent Cold War. Catholic leaders participated in the establishment of the welfare and social infrastructure of post-war France and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Robert Schuman, together with Jean Monnet, envisioned the first European Coal and Steel Community. However, the *Mouvement Républicain Populaire* quickly declined when its alliance with the radicals and socialists once again collapsed, this time over the school issue, when it supported the 1951 loi Barangé, granting scholarships for children in Catholic schools. Thereafter, most of the Catholic electorate moved to the Gaullist party.

Although the school dispute remained unresolved (Prost, 2017), the Fourth Republic declared itself *laïque* in 1946 and was affirmed as such by a referendum. Article 1 of the new constitution stated: 'France is an indivisible, *laïque*, democratic and social Republic'. The same assertion would reappear in article 1 of the Fifth (and current) Republic's Constitution (4 October 1958). Following its rejection of all racial and religious discrimination, Article 2 of the 1958 Constitution added a firm affirmation of republican respect for all beliefs. The Fifth Republic's first President, General de Gaulle, tried to definitively guarantee secular equilibrium. He abandoned the project of a new concordat with the Holy See and decided, with his Prime Minister's help, to put an end to the school war. The law of December 1959 passed despite the discontent of both the Catholic and secular sides, granting the freedom of education outside the public-school system to all religious groups. The law proposed public funding for teachers in denominational schools and legal recognition of their religious purpose, as long as they legally agreed to uphold the state's educational mission, to welcome any child without consideration of his/her family's religion, and to accept that religious education was not compulsory. This 'French-style' deal continues to this day and maintains a delicate balance. Any attempt to change it in either direction incites immediate reactions. In 1984, a demonstration of one million people successfully defeated the Minister of Education's unifying project, leading to his resignation together with that of the prime minister. Ten years later, a draft law introduced by the centre-right attempting to set up municipal financing for denominational schools provoked vehement indignation among secularists and was subsequently abandoned.

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## Facing religious pluralism: current tensions

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At the end of the twentieth century, *laïcité* was still a key element of classic left-wing discourse, recalled before any election to keep voters straight in an ideological sense. Thirty years later, *laïcité* has been loudly reaffirmed as the 'cornerstone of the Republic' and is now as much an element of right-wing and extreme right-wing discourse as it is of the left. The constitutional principles that *laïcité* was supposed to promote have been redefined by the Conseil d'Etat as: the neutrality of the state and its services; respect for religious pluralism; defence of republican values; and even defence of *le vivre-ensemble* (living together). This shift is the result of three interrelated factors: (a) an accelerating pluralization of the French religious landscape; (b) new opinions on and political divisions about the growth and dangers of Islam; and (c) new public policies adopted by successive governments, which oscillate between protection, de-discrimination, and monitoring.

First, noticeable religious pluralization occurred at the same time as a marked secularization among Catholics and a significant increase in religious non-affiliation. The phenomenon of de-Catholicization in France started at the time of the Revolution. It developed in the 1960s and accelerated at the end of the 1980s. Since then, the secularization of French society has been accurately described as massive. Depending on the surveys and research under review, between 35 and 50 per cent of the present population report that they have no religion. In the early twentieth century, Catholics constituted 98 per cent of the population, but are now no longer the majority; currently only 38 to 50 per cent say that they are Catholic, among which only 4 to 5 per cent still practise. Younger generations have almost no knowledge of Catholicism except visual familiarity with the thousands of monasteries, churches, and cathedrals dotting the urban and rural landscape. This slide into oblivion has been defined by sociologists as 'Catholic ex-culturation' (Hervieu-Léger, 2003).

At the same time, the French population has become more religiously diverse, due partly to new trends in conversion to 'foreign' and evidently attractive religions or cults, but much more importantly to the post-war, Cold War, decolonial, then global migrations. In the three generations who have not yet reached the age of 60, 30 per cent of the French came from outside France according to a 2011 INSEE Survey (Tribalat, 2015). Demographically, Islam is the most common religion brought to France by immigration, but it is not the only one.

p. 629 Today, 3 to 5 per cent of the population say that they belong to alternative forms of Christianity such as Evangelical Protestantism, which is on the rise. Historical Protestants are also present in their traditional enclaves. They are now in competition with Evangelical missionary churches which have been planted across the country along with Pentecostal, Charismatic, and ethnic churches, brought by North American, Caribbean, South American, and African missionaries. They are particularly active in the Île-de-France, contributing to what might be termed a Protestant 'creolization'. Orthodox Christians of Slavic, Romanian, and Armenian origins, Eastern Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Jehovah's Witnesses, and members of other small groups live in urbanized areas as a result of the specificities of their migration or conversion history.

Christian diversity is nevertheless only a small part of the new French diversity. After the Second World War, the Jewish community was restored by surviving refugees from all over Europe, then by North African immigration, following decolonization. As already indicated, Algerian Jews had already become French citizens. Descendants of North African or Sephardi Jews now represent 70 per cent of the Jewish community in France. They are concentrated in Paris, specifically its inner *banlieues* (suburbs), as well as in the Mediterranean area. Islam, however, is the most widespread French religion, apart from the ever-declining Catholics. The Muslim population is now estimated at 5 to 8 per cent (sometimes even 12 per cent) of the total population and is concentrated in predominantly secular or less Catholic areas, for example the Mediterranean, the Parisian *banlieues*, the metropolitan area of Lyon and the north-east. Since the Muslim population is noticeably heterogeneous in its religious practice, which differs according to generation, national origin, social status, and current trends in global Islam (Godard, 2015), it is one of the most pluralist religions within French religious pluralism as a whole.

Table 35.1 captures the overall picture in France, paying attention to the different historical trajectories in different parts of the country. Catholic cultures endure even when practice has declined.

After epic and long-standing Catholic hegemony, France has at one and the same time become both religiously indifferent and religiously plural. Such a shift did not occur without pain, especially for the new and post-Christian movements which have endured public mistrust and strict administrative regulation. In 2001, the Assemblée nationale passed the controversial About-Picard law, which forbade the psychological abuse of populations deemed vulnerable (either because of age, infirmity, or disability) by cultic organizations. In 2002, an inter-ministerial mission directed at sectarian abuse, and known by its acronym MIVILUDES (*Mission interministérielle de vigilance et de lutte contre les dérives sectaires* [Interministerial

Mission of Vigilance and Combat against Sectarian Aberrations]), was created by presidential decree. The agency, which is still active, is responsible for the observation and analysis of sectarian movements (cults) and for educating the public about potential threats. For years, Jehovah’s Witnesses were prevented from opening their Kingdom Halls (meeting places) because of public petitions and municipal roadblocks. They were subject to countless tax audits and faced discrimination in employment and in divorce settlements. New Evangelical churches have faced similar difficulties in obtaining building permits and are still stigmatized by the press.

**Table 35.1** Religious affiliation in France, 2012

Religious affiliation	Estimated distribution in areas with an historic Catholic majority (%)	Estimated distribution in areas with an historic secular (laïque) majority (%)
None	30	50
Catholic	60	35
Historical Protestants	2	1
New Evangelical Protestants	1	2
Orthodox and Oriental Christians	1	2
Jews	0.5	1
Muslims	5	8
Buddhists	0.3	0.6
Hindus and others	0.2	0.4

Source: Data drawn from Fourquet and Lebras (2014, maps 10–17).

p. 630 All that said, no religious minority raises more suspicion than Islam. The collective narrative is replete with secular but also religious and colonial prejudice, which is largely linked to the legacy of the Algerian War of Independence; it portrays Islam as alien to and incompatible with modern France. While at least three generations of French Muslims have established this religion as part of modern France, a large section of the public deems Islam to be responsible not only for the social exclusion which affects sections of the Muslim population but also for the radical awakening and Jihad of the younger generations. At the same time, an orthodox approach toward rituals, practices, and dress codes, as well as an open and conspicuous pride in their faith, has grown within Salafist and Islamist cells in the cities. These phenomena provoke both fear within the Muslim community and hatred in the wider society.



Conversely, since the turn of the millennium, legislative, judicial, and administrative institutions have encouraged an increase in the number of mosques. Nearly 2,000 have been opened. Public authorities have approved legal accommodations facilitating Muslim practice, such as granting days off for feasts and holy days, supervising ritual slaughter sites for the celebration of Eid al-Adha, and creating plots in French cemeteries to conform with Muslim burial customs. Several times the state has attempted to organize the national and regional representation of Muslim associations, first in 1988, then in 1993, 1999, and 2001. In 2003, the CFCM was created under the supervision of the Ministry of the Interior. The state has also tried to support the financing of mosques and Islamic activities, first in 2005, through the *Fondation des œuvres de l'Islam de France*, then in 2016 by the *Fondation de l'Islam de France*. The French education system has incorporated modules on religions (2003), and morality and civics (2015) ↪ into its curriculum, in order to promote mutual tolerance and understanding in light of republican values and the new motto: *le vivre-ensemble*.

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All these accommodations, undertaken to favour and to further religious pluralism and the freedom of religious minorities, are the result of a policy which has established regular meetings between religious leaders and the Prime Minister and/or the President since the early 2000s. The President regularly receives or visits Catholic, Jewish, Protestant, and Muslim representatives. The new intimacy has been much criticized by supporters of *laïcité*, who now include the right and extreme right. These pro-secular advocates denounce the state's lack of firmness towards religion and the growing visibility of Muslim (and Catholic) activities, not to mention the underlying reasons for such visibility: recruitment by extremist groups and terrorist attacks in Toulouse (2013), Paris (2015), Nice (2016), Strasbourg (2018), and Conflans and Nice (2020) (Kepel and Jardin, 2017).

The security policies of recent administrations have deployed curfews, the military surveillance of public places, renewed anti-terrorist laws, the surveillance of preachers, closures of mosques and propaganda websites, and a free phone number for reporting radical behaviour (Stop-Jihadism). In October 2020, President Macron announced new legislation directed at Islamist separatism. Such policies, however, are considered insufficient by the political opposition. For example, a further dispute has erupted over the wearing of the Islamic headscarf. The first *affaire* took place in a public school in 1989; it was the catalyst for a revival of *laïcité* that occurred at the beginning of the twenty-first century. As a consequence of the law banning the headscarf in schools (2004) and the burqa in public spaces (2011), *laïcité* has not only been reaffirmed but rearticulated to include gender equality. Cases involving the burkini, which was banned from French beaches in 2016, have led in turn to concerns about mothers volunteering during school outings: should they too be prohibited from wearing the veil (2019)? Taken together these episodes attest to the political and media frenzy which occurs at the slightest hint of Islam and gender in the French public sphere.

## Conclusion

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French religious history has been always been tumultuous, and in many ways it still is. After a long period of Catholic and monarchical domination, followed by a short and only partly successful revolution, it took time to separate the state from the church, a process that ended in 1905. It would take almost another century before most of the French population fully accepted the implications of *laïcité* and bit by bit detached themselves from Catholicism. In the meantime, the French Republic has experienced a marked pluralization of religion in which Islam has become the largest minority. Allegedly positive, open, and muted, *laïcité* has had to come to terms with its inadequate management of new religious movements and a widespread hostility towards Islam. ↪ In the new millennium, French *laïcité* has mobilized political energies against Islamic activities, and in so doing it has changed the rules of the game.

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The old divide, well-rooted since the Revolution, between the Catholic right and the secular and non-religious left, is still in evidence on electoral maps of votes cast for and against European Union treaties. In contrast, since the year 2000, in most other elections (including presidential ballots) a 'transfer' seems to have taken place. The formerly Catholic and somewhat right-wing regions have drawn closer to the left as religious practice has waned, while the traditionally de-Christianized regions have moved to the right. This shift has been less perceptible when a significant Muslim population was present because the far-right National Rally (formerly National Front) prompted a reconciliation between at least some left-wing de-Christianized regions and some right-wing secularized Catholic areas. In 2017, for example, centre-moderates supporting Emmanuel Macron faced off against the dissenting, Islamophobic, and extreme-right supporting Marine Le Pen in the second round of the presidential elections. Thus, the new 'two Frances' confronted each other face to face. The election results were striking when electoral maps were compared to maps showing areas with a high Muslim population: the greater the concentration of Muslims, the more Marine Le Pen won votes. Macron's France corresponded to areas with a less significant Muslim presence and greater pluralization, where practising Catholics live side by side with a highly secularized population (Fourquet and Lebras, 2014). In such ways, French politics remains closely linked to its history: religion continues to matter.

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### CHAPTER

## 36 Germany

Michael Minkenberg

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### Abstract

This chapter examines the relationship between religion and the state in modern Germany, in particular the church–state regime from German unification onwards, and church involvement in politics at a variety of levels. It contrasts the ‘stubbornness’ of the ‘partnership model’ between church and state with a variety of policy changes, themselves the result of an increasingly fluid context of religious pluralization which puts pressure on the church–state relationship. The chapter aims to capture this tension, both from a historical perspective and in light of current challenges. The first section delineates the historical origins of the German model and its relevance for the relationship between the majority churches (Protestant and Catholic) and democratization. The second section addresses aspects of religion and state at particular levels of interaction: the polity (the constitution), and policies (the influence of churches in public education, and the governance of religious diversity—particularly Muslim rights).

**Keywords:** church–state relations, partnership model, Protestant churches, Catholic Church, public education, religious diversity, Muslim rights

**Subject:** History of Religion, Religion

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IN modern Germany, the relationship between religion and the state can be considered as an equation, with one constant and many variables. The constant is the church–state relationship as laid down in the Weimar Constitution of 1919, continued in the Federal Republic’s Basic Law of 1949 and worked out in the institutional arrangements of what has been called a system of ‘cooperative separation’, or a ‘partnership model’ (Robbers, 2005: 80; Monsma and Soper, 2009: 183). The variables relate to church involvement in politics at different levels, including the differences in approach and theology of the two major churches (Catholic and Protestant), the varied relationships between these churches and the political parties, with a strong Christian democratic party as a focal point but not necessarily a ‘natural ally’, and the churches’ efforts to influence public policy, especially in the fields of education, morality, and multiculturalism (Minkenberg, 2003a; von Beyme, 2015). All this must be seen in the increasingly fluid context of growing religious pluralism which puts pressure on both the constant and the variables, and challenges the traditional model of religion and state in Germany.

This chapter tries to capture this equation, both from an historical perspective and in light of current challenges. The first section delineates the historical origins of the German model, including its relevance for the relationship between the churches and democratization. The second section addresses aspects of religion and state at particular levels of interaction: both the polity, that is the constitutional–legal and institutional level; and policies, that is the influence of churches in selected areas of public policy such as education and the governance of religious diversity.

## Prelude: the partnership of religion, state, and illiberal nationalism

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p. 635 With respect to religion and the state, modern German history is largely characterized by a conflictual relationship between the churches and modernity, and in particular ↪ between the churches, liberalism, and democracy. To begin with, the Protestant Reformation and the introduction of the principle *cuius regio eius religio* (literally ‘whose realm, his religion’, established in the Augsburg Peace of 1555) laid the foundation of the modern state in Germany, as a confessional state as elsewhere in Europe (Madeley, 2003: 27–39; Zippelius, 1997: 78–87). But while the states of the Catholic core of Europe, as well as the Protestant periphery, emerged with confessional monopolies and related churches, Germany, like Switzerland and the Netherlands, was divided by the confessional split. Moreover, there was no German state as such but a collection of principalities, large and small, each one a confessional state; and it is in this context that the German ‘partnership model’ came into being (Monsma and Soper, 2009: 173). The German lands soon witnessed the rising power of Brandenburg–Prussia, a predominantly Protestant state that found its own path into the modern age and which diverged from other countries. In the Protestant countries of Northern and north–western Europe, a convergence between Protestantism and liberal ideas occurred; the Reformation succeeded where the new faith found support among secular elites. Even more specifically, where Reformed Protestantism, in particular Calvinism, dominated, an evolution of parliamentary rule and republicanism could be observed (Anderson, 2009: 21–7; see also Gorski, 2011: 44–55).

The case of Protestant Brandenburg–Prussia does not fit this pattern. During the seventeenth century, Brandenburg–Prussia developed into an absolutist state with illiberal features that, together with the Lutheran state church, prohibited democratization until the late nineteenth century. A major cause for this development can be seen in the protracted conflict between a Calvinist state elite, in particular the Hohenzollern rulers, and the Lutheran ‘Estates’,<sup>1</sup> church, and population all of whom were ‘disciplined’ into submission from above (Gorski, 2011: 55–71). The Lutheran emphasis on authority in the German lands also resulted in a split within German Protestantism in the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century over the issues of liberalism and democracy with a majority supporting the authoritarian regime of the Second Empire and distrusting democracy in the Weimar Republic. The case of nation building in Germany involves a distinctly religious component, which, on the surface, shares similarities with the role of religion in the French and the American cases (for the following, see Minkenberg, 1997: 66ff). In the decades leading up to unification in 1871, the notion of the Germans as a ‘chosen people’, and of a special ‘covenant’ between God and the Germans existed in Protestant circles. After 1871, this notion became not only increasingly secularized but corrupted (Lehmann, 1991). Evidently, God was with the Prussians when they and their German allies defeated the French army at Sedan in September 1870 and the king’s words ‘Welch eine Wendung durch Gottes Führung!’ (literally ‘What a turn by means of God’s leadership!’) became the motto of the commemorative *Sedantag*, one of the young nation–state’s national holidays. Moreover, the war of 1870–1 transformed the ↪ French–German antagonism from a political into a quasi–religious one and resulted in the notion of a French–German *Erbfeindschaft*, with the other side deemed a secular version of the Christian foe, that is, the devil (Jeismann, 1992: 262–8).

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The medieval mythology of *Kaiser* and *Reich* was invoked by Otto von Bismarck (1815–98) against the will of his own king (Wilhelm I, r. 1861–88) to bring together the German princes and to convey an immediate

sense of legitimacy for the new polity. Though inspired by modern national and liberal ideas, this was not a liberal construction. Unlike France, Belgium, or Italy at the time, but much more like the contemporary United States, Germany was a religiously heterogeneous country. Thus, with Bismarck's unification, Prussian Protestantism could not simply be extended as a state religion for the new nation state. The alliance of throne and altar had already embedded Lutheranism in Prussia as well as in Northern Europe and continued when the Prussian king, as 'Summus Episcopus' (the head of the Protestant church in Prussia, which was by far the largest state in unified Germany), became emperor in the new nation-state and was invested with substantial powers by Bismarck's constitution, creating thereby a mighty national institution (Wehler, 1985: 114).

Moreover, with German unification under Prussian leadership, and nation building under Bismarck, the new national elites joined with other European forces in provoking a clash with the Catholic Church and milieus which were dominant in many non-Prussian provinces of the German Reich, and indeed in some provinces in Prussia (the Rhineland and the eastern, formerly Polish, territories). In contrast with the French Third Republic or the Belgian kingdom where the Catholic Church was also under attack from liberals, the German conflict unfolded in an illiberal political setting. Tensions between nation builders and the Catholic Church culminated in aggressive anticlerical politics and even the persecution of Catholic clergy under Bismarck in the so-called *Kulturkampf*. Thus, liberalism and democracy became a 'nightmare' for Catholics (Anderson, 2009: 31). This conflict alienated many Catholics from the Reich and introduced significant steps towards a separation of church and state (e.g. the establishment of a state monopoly in education and civil marriage), but it never reached the dimensions of *laïcité* in France or the wall of separation in the United States. Moreover, the Prussian dominance in the politics and wars of German unification and in running the affairs of the Reich, along with the *Kulturkampf*, contributed to the very different relationship of Protestants and Catholics to the new nation state which, as some argue, was only overcome by the common experience of the First World War (Gauly, 1991). The new state and its rulers were much too dependent on the contribution of established religion to assure legitimacy for their actions—as Bismarck himself recognized when he strove for reconciliation with the Catholic Center Party and its leader Ludwig Windhorst (1812–91) (Nowak, 1995: 141–97). In the meantime, the regional governments continued their friendly relationships with the churches by providing them with substantial financial subsidies (Monsma and Soper, 2009: 174).

In Imperial Germany, then, (established) religion and illiberal nationalism worked hand in hand to consolidate the new regime and thus contributed to fostering the ill-fated traditions of the German *Obrigkeitsstaat*. As Hans-Ulrich Wehler observed, Lutheran religiosity engendered among Germans a 'metaphysical view of the state based on a purely emotional sensibility', which lent a 'Caesaro-papist' character to the rule by the Prussian king and German emperor, assisted by the Lutheran church's contribution to the new state's legitimacy (Wehler, 1985: 114). In this way, Protestantism increasingly assumed the role of a Lutheran state religion in an authoritarian nation state, transformed from a cultural Protestantism into an imperial Protestantism, absorbing step by step the existing religious resources and utilizing them for non-religious, and ultimately anti-human, ends (see Minkenberg, 1997: 67).

With the end of the *landesherrliche Kirchenregiment* (state church regimes at the regional level), the Weimar Constitution marks a clear break in the history of church–state relations in Germany. The constitution adopted the principle of separation between church and state and denied the Catholic Church the possibility of confessional schools, but overall it was not a neat separation and assured the churches major privileges such as the state collecting church taxes and the status of churches as corporations under public law but not integrated into state structures. Hence, it was called a 'limping separation', or more benignly a 'partnership model' of church–state relations (Zippelius, 1997: 150–4; Robbers, 2005: 80–2). This arrangement did not prevent the ongoing 'culture clash' between Protestants and Catholics in the Weimar Republic, noting a

crucial political difference: ‘The mass of “Political Catholicism” stood in the camp of the Republic, Protestantism overwhelmingly in the camp of its enemies’ (Kittel, 2003: 250, my translation).

Consequently, when comparing Protestant and Catholic countries in the inter-war period of the twentieth century, Germany emerges as an exception once again. The Weimar Republic was the only Protestant-dominated country in Europe in which democracy gave way to a fascist dictatorship, all other countries which went in this direction were Catholic-dominated, except for Belgium and not quite democratic Ireland (Minkenberg, 2018: table 2). After the Nazi takeover, the Catholic Church in Germany neither supported nor opposed the new regime, a position facilitated by the benign attitudes of the Vatican and the conclusion of the *Reichskonkordat* between Hitler’s Germany and the Holy See in 1933. This does not mean that the Catholic Church was indifferent to the new political realities. But while numerous individual Catholics opposed the regime, the Church’s focus was on safeguarding its institutional autonomy in the face of increasing violations of the concordat by the regime (Zippelius, 1997: 156–9). German Protestantism, on the other hand, split into an ultra-nationalist movement, the ‘German Christians’ which openly supported the Nazi regime, and an anti-fascist church, the Confessing Church, which resisted it (Monsma and Soper, 2009: 175f).

## Church and state in the Federal Republic

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After the Second World War, the fateful fusion of religion and national identity as a political resource was utterly discredited for the new German regimes on both sides of the Iron Curtain, but the political approach to religion played out in contrasting ways. In East Germany, the creation of a socialist regime meant the repudiation of the nationalist past along with the downgrading of religion which, in a strictly Marxist reading, was treated as a remnant of the bourgeois past or ‘false consciousness’. Consequently, the German Democratic Republic, echoing the practice in most of Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe, built a wall of separation between church and state which surpassed the ones in Western societies and resulted in walling-in the churches and religion in specifically designated areas (Pollack, 1994). For the leaders of the socialist New Germany and an increasing part of its population, God was indeed dead. The proportion of the East German population not belonging to any denomination rose from 5.9 per cent in 1946 to 68 per cent in 1990 while the share of Catholics shrank from 12.2 per cent to 4.6 per cent and that of Protestants from 81.5 per cent to 26 per cent during the same period (von Beyme, 2015: 84).

The founders of the West German state chose a very different approach. For a start, the calamitous alliance of throne and altar in the context of the *Obrigkeitsstaat* needed to be undone, which meant downplaying religion as a resource for national identity. After the Holocaust, the symbols of the nation-state and the religious realm were firmly separated; the Germans could not see themselves as a ‘chosen people’ anymore. As theologian Jürgen Moltmann put it: ‘Without Auschwitz, the national flag would perhaps still hang in the Christian churches in Germany’ (quoted in Vögele, 1994: 253, fn. 155, my translation). Rather, the German churches and democracy were finally and fully reconciled. With the formation of the Christian democratic parties CDU and CSU in the initial years of the Federal Republic, the church-friendly politics of the Adenauer government in the 1950s, and the Second Vatican Council (1962–5), it can safely be said that German Catholicism came to terms with liberal democracy. The Protestant churches followed suit but it took them longer. In the Stuttgart Declaration of October 1945, the newly constituted *Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland* (EKD—the official name of the Protestant church in Germany) acknowledged the church’s guilt in failing to resist the Nazi regime and the crimes it committed (though it did not mention the Holocaust or other particular atrocities) and pledged a ‘fresh start’ (Monsma and Soper, 2009: 176). That said, it took the EKD until 1985 to issue an official document endorsing democracy and human rights (Graf, 2009).



Below the level of national identity and democracy, however, church–state relations were not as clear cut: the partnership between the (West German) state and religion as laid down in the Weimar Constitution continued, with the effect that the separation between state and the churches was still ‘limping’. In the Parliamentary Council which drafted the Basic Law in 1948/9, the churches’ demands, supported by thirty-one Christian Democratic, Center, and German Party delegates in the Council (the ‘secular’ opposition comprised thirty-four Social Democratic, Free Democratic, and Communist delegates) were met halfway in a compromise favoured by Konrad Adenauer (von Beyme, 2015: 104f). The churches asked for a re-Christianization of German society, which was addressed in some of the *Land* constitutions in the southern and western parts of the Federal Republic, but the Catholic Church’s insistence on parental control of the school curriculum was rejected in favour of state control. Most importantly, however, the churches’ public law status of Weimar times was adopted by the Basic Law. The churches secured their privileges, enshrined in Article 140, which incorporated Articles 136–139 and 141 of the Weimar Constitution. These articles established the freedom of religion and the non-existence of a state church along with a privileged legal position for the two churches, in for example their status as corporate bodies under public law, their right to levy taxes through the state tax system and the recognition of Sunday and religious holidays as national holidays. Also, the Basic Law stipulates religious (that is, confessional) instruction as part of the ordinary curriculum in state schools in Article 7 (3) (Robbers, 2005: 79), which, along with the recognition of Sundays and national religious (Christian) holidays in Article 139, precluded a radical separation of state and church as in France or the United States. At the heart of this arrangement lies a principle which Steven Monsma and J. Christopher Soper properly call ‘positive neutrality’: the state granting religious communities certain privileges justified by recognition of their positive role in public life. The churches were also privileged by their rights to participate in a number of public institutions, such as the broadcasting councils and the welfare services, the latter by and large being carried by the two major churches but financed by the state (Frerk, 2005: 10; von Beyme, 2015: 110).

An innovation which was meant to foster the process of re-Christianization was the so-called *invocatio Dei*, the invocation of God in the Preamble of the German constitution which read ‘conscious of their [the German people’s] responsibility before God and men’. Such a reference did not exist in either the first German constitution of 1848 or the Weimar Constitution. Lawyers dispute the legal relevance of the invocation (von Beyme, 2015: 106), but it can be argued that the founding fathers saw it as more than a rhetorical formula. As the Social Democrat member of the Parliamentary Council, Carlo Schmid, put it: ‘We see it [the Preamble] as an essential element of the Basic Law. It confers upon the latter its proper political and legal qualifications’ (quoted in Vögele, 1994: 268, my translation; see also Minkenberg, 1997: 68f). As in the US Declaration of Independence, the nature of the Preamble’s ‘God’ remained unspecified but presumably the founders had in mind the biblical God rather than an abstract being. The interpretation of this *invocatio Dei* by the courts and by legal as well as other experts largely confirmed Schmid’s suggestion; it was identified as expressing an inherent link between Christianity and the entire political order of the Federal Republic (Vögele, 1994: 268). This view corresponds closely with the official reading of the relationship by the Protestant churches (Rat der EKD, 1997). And whatever the case, the Preamble of the Basic Law underscores the constitutionally enshrined interlocking of religion and politics in the Federal Republic.

Based on these constitutional provisions, the legal stipulations following from the public law status of the churches, and the financial and personal intertwinement of church and state in the Federal Republic, the German system of church–state relations has been said to sit more or less in the middle: between a strict separationist model (like the USA) on one side and the historical model of a confessional state church, as in Denmark, on the other (Robbers, 2005: 80f; Monsma and Soper, 2009: 169). However, a closer look puts this equidistance in question. When assessing all church–state regimes in democratic countries in light of criteria beyond mere constitutional and strictly legal considerations, such as the appointment of church personnel and the financing of churches by the state, religious education in state schools and others

indicators of public support for majority churches (Minkenberg, 2003b: 122f.; Fox, 2008: ch. 6), the German model emerges as a peculiarly hybrid case.

On the one hand, the German 'partnership model' joins the middle category of most Western European cases labelled as 'partial establishment' (along with Austria, Belgium, Italy, and Spain), due to the uneven distribution of privileges and state support for majority churches compared with other, smaller religious communities (Minkenberg, 2003b: 123; Fox, 2008: 136–9). On the other hand, Germany is not in the middle of the democratic continuum because while belonging to the partial establishment group, the two major churches in Germany are somewhat more established than those in Italy or Spain. Likewise, in the group of mixed Protestant countries, that is, the core countries of the Protestant Reformation (Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland) where a new relationship between the state and a pluralizing field of religions had to be found at an early stage, the German model stands out as the most established version, along with the British model which is characterized by an established church in England and a national church in Scotland.

In sum, the German model of church–state relations has a particular tilt (Zippelius, 1997: 159–64; Fox, 2008: 129f; von Beyme, 2015: 99–101). Consequently, scholars such as Peter Katzenstein argue that the German churches should be considered as 'para-public institutions' because of their particular status and their public recognition, which link the private and public sectors firmly together and result in their political activities being restricted to selected policy fields (Katzenstein, 1987: 58–60; Minkenberg, 2003a: 206, 216, n. 46). The tilt gets even more pronounced considering: (a) that in the course of German unification in 1989/90 the partnership model was imposed wholesale on the new *Länder* in the East despite the suppression of religious freedom and the de-churching process during the Communist era (see above); and (b) that nothing has changed in the basic institutional arrangement of church–state relations in Germany since the 1990s, as compared with Sweden, Finland, or Spain where church privileges have diminished somewhat since 2000.

Finally, the steady tilt in institutional terms coexists with an ever-more fluid religious situation in German society. Some thirty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the reunified country's religious landscape is characterized by an almost equal share of Protestants (25 per cent) and Catholics (28 per cent), a small but growing group of Orthodox Christians (2 per cent), a similarly growing but much smaller group of Jews (0.1 per cent) and a sizable and rapidly growing minority of Muslims (5 per cent), to which must be added a large group of non-affiliated (38 per cent) mostly in the eastern parts of the country (Fowid, 2019; see also Minkenberg, 2018: table 1). It is clear that Germany has become increasingly heterogeneous since the 1980s and should be placed among the more diverse societies of Europe such as the UK and the Netherlands, not to mention the non-European countries of immigration in North America, Australia, and New Zealand.

## Church, state, and conflicts over policy

An examination of policy areas highlights the German approach to church–state relations in a more dynamic way; these include moral issues, family policies, and social welfare. The first two of these constitute a particularly conflictual field in which fundamental norms and regulations are negotiated which touch on basic Christian topics such as the family, gender, abortion, life and death, and more (Minkenberg, 2003a). The latter is less visible to the public eye but constitutes a crucial pillar of the German ‘partnership model’, in that the two majority churches play a significant role in the welfare system, not least because of their scope: at the beginning of the new century their welfare organizations, the Catholic Caritas and Protestant Diakonie, officially employed around 900,000 full-time staff, plus more than 500,000 in corollary organizations or as volunteers (Frerk, 2005: 331). This and their immense assets in real estate and finances (8,250 square kilometers of land and property in the early 2000s) puts them in the top range of powerful corporations in Germany, despite the ongoing decline in church membership (von Beyme, 2015: 98). In this chapter, however, two other policy areas have been selected because they highlight long-lasting and highly visible disputes, which are directly affected by the ongoing process of religious pluralization: these are education and immigration.

### Education

Germany belongs to the set of countries where denominational education is mandatory in public schools, according to the Basic Law, but its implementation introduces options at the level of the *Länder* (see above and Monsma and Soper, 2009: 189–97). In such systems it is not surprising that new religious actors, such as Muslims, are joining the game, hoping to receive similar rights and entitlements. Koopmans and colleagues (2005) demonstrate that the cultural and religious rights of Muslim communities in education expanded from the 1980s until 2002, only to stagnate ever since (also Minkenberg, 2018). The majority churches in Germany, on the other hand, have become increasingly active in trying to preserve their hold over religious instruction in public schools; for instance, they often complain that the regional governments do not fully exploit the religious education courses, and in particular that they fail to reach all potential students (Heinig, 2011: 175).

One particular controversy went much further and led to a serious engagement by the majority churches in order to resist a change introduced by the regional government of Brandenburg. Based on special regulations following the reunification of Germany in 1990 and taking into account the low levels of church affiliation and Christian religiosity in the East (see above), the state of Brandenburg introduced non-confessional religious education in a new mandatory course entitled *Lebensgestaltung, Ethik, Religionskunde* (LER) (life-conduct, ethics, and religions). This move was met by a fierce reaction from religious actors, particularly the EKD, which took the case to the Constitutional Court. The clamour arose from the churches’ concern that the state was impinging on their constitutionally preserved territory, forcing them to withdraw from a field that they dominated in the rest of the country. In addition, the content of the LER course is exclusively organized by the state. The Constitutional Court took five years to issue a decision in this highly sensitive case, which finally led to a compromise. This confirms the status of LER as a compulsory subject but offers the students the opportunity to opt for confessional religious education instead. It is the churches’ right and responsibility to organize these alternative courses (Heinig, 2011). In effect, the state’s attempt to expand its reach succeeded since LER remained in force as the main subject of study. However, the state was to a certain extent constrained since the churches regained their right to organize religious instruction, thereby expanding their sphere of influence compared to the situation between 1990 and 1995. It also served as a warning to future federal and regional state actors aiming to expand their domain in the field of religious education.

This has become particularly visible in the case of Islamic religious education (IRE) in German public schools. Since the education system is federally organized, there is no uniform approach to including Islam in the religious education curriculum. Given the varying strength of Muslim communities and their tendency to segregation, the *Länder*, just like Brandenburg in the case of LER, have taken divergent regulatory paths. As a recent study shows (Euchner, 2018: 96), some states have introduced IRE as a regular subject in public schools (Hesse, Northrhine–Westphalia, Lower Saxony); others, like the southern states of Bavaria and Baden–Württemberg, have initiated trials in specific school types; and yet others—notably all East German states (where Muslim communities are largely absent) plus the city–state of Hamburg—lack any offerings at all. According to Eva–Maria Euchner, this diversity is best explained by the detail of the ‘partnership relations’ in many of the West German *Länder*. There are, however, limits to these variations due to the national institutional and constitutional framework. Within the latter it is in fact the actors’ (that is, the Muslim communities’ and political parties’) resources and strategies, rather than the partnership model per se, which determine the outcome.

## Immigration and integration

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The majority churches have been active in immigration and integration issues since the beginning of the Federal Republic, especially regarding the need to integrate German refugees from the eastern territories and the first waves of labour migrants (see Katzenstein, 1987: 225f; von Beyme, 2015: 83f). As befits their theological identity, their primary concern in this field is with welfare issues; that said, they do not refrain from taking part in public debates. Here, both of the majority churches collaborate in the forming of public statements and activities, such as the *Woche der ausländischen Mitbürger* (the week of ↵ foreign co–citizens) which was inaugurated by the EKD in 1975 but is supported by both churches. Over the years the Council of the EKD and the German Bishops’ Conference of the Catholic Church have issued multiple statements, and in 1993, they established an ecumenical working group on migration issues which makes it hard to identify a separate Protestant or Catholic involvement in immigration policy (Rat der EKD, 1998: paragraph 97).

With a strong Christian democratic party, one would expect a particular closeness of the Christian churches to party politics and policy making. While that may have been the case in the foundational era of the Federal Republic, there is a striking distance between Christian Democrats and the Christian churches, particularly over migration issues (von Beyme, 2015: 140). In several instances the German majority churches tried to influence immigration policies after unification, most notably in the reform of the asylum law in 1993 when the right to asylum was severely restricted and the churches formulated minimal standards to protect asylum seekers (e.g. open access to the territory of the Federal Republic and effective protection against deportation), but with little success (Rat der EKD, 1998: paragraph 172). When the Red–Green coalition government (1998–2005) introduced a new immigration bill in 2000 (passed as law in 2005), the Catholic Church demanded that the new law reflect fundamental Christian values such as solidarity and human rights. The Christian Democrats countered by emphasizing the need to limit the level of immigration, which was already low by international standards; a strategy in line with their dictum that Germany was ‘not a country of immigration’ (Katzenstein, 1987: 216; von Beyme, 2015: 213).

In specific policy areas the churches often advocated positions which were more pro–immigrant than those of the CDU/CSU, for example the acceptance of the principle of ‘*ius soli*’ (the territorial principle) in the new nationality code of 2000 and of dual citizenship (Rat der EKD, 1998: paragraph 174), as well as the call for an easing of the family reunification regulations for accepted refugees (Huber, 2001). In asylum issues, the churches have repeatedly been at odds with government policies since the 1990s when they occasionally provided shelter for asylum seekers who faced deportation because they were not admitted by the courts according to the asylum law of 1993. This practice, the so–called *Kirchenasyl* (church asylum), was resumed in the wake of the 2015 influx of refugees from Syria and elsewhere (Schmidt, 2015). Against the hard–line approach on the part of some German Christian Democrats, in particular the CSU–led Bavarian government

which strongly opposed church asylum, leaders of both majority churches maintained their stance of continuing to provide shelter to refugees (as of April 2020, there have been 400 cases; Ökumenische Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft, 2020).

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The integration of immigrants in Germany has been a challenge since the early days of the Federal Republic; what has changed, however, is the growing relevance of religion and religious diversity in this process. Germany has had a pronounced degree of religious diversity since the Reformation (see above), but this has intensified in recent years due to the influx of migrants with a non-Christian identity and the rise in the proportion of unaffiliated, in particular in East Germany. Today, Islam is the third largest denomination in Germany, as in most other Western democracies (Minkenberg, 2018: Table 1). ↵ How does Germany confront the challenge of accommodating this large non-Christian group and how does it differ from other countries with similar experiences? These questions are addressed using an analysis of religious and cultural group rights developed by Ruud Koopmans and colleagues (2005). When considering these rights both within public institutions (e.g. the state recognition of Islamic schools and Islamic religious programmes in public broadcasting) and beyond them (e.g. ritual slaughter and Islamic calls to prayer), Germany prior to 9/11 scores a value of -0.23 (on a scale from -1.00=no recognition of group rights at all to +1.00=full recognition, averaged for the period 1990–2002), thereby exhibiting a rather restrictive approach. Yet, Germany is not as restrictive as France (-0.37) or Switzerland (-0.68), and not as welcoming as predominantly Protestant Sweden (-0.18) and predominantly Catholic Austria (+0.10), not to mention the European vanguards of multicultural politics, the religiously more diverse cases of Great Britain (+0.50) and the Netherlands (+0.55) (Minkenberg, 2018: appendix I).

A closer look at the pattern of distribution of West European democracies along this continuum indicates a confessional factor in shaping the degree of openness, with Catholic countries being more restrictive than Protestant ones. Here, Germany's legacy of illiberal Protestantism and its significant proportion of Catholics may come into play. The German 'partnership model' is not in itself a guarantor of a partnership approach to the sizable and still-growing Muslim community, although the German majority churches have not only reached out but have themselves actively engaged in the integration of Muslims (von Beyme, 2015: 218–21). In addition, there has been an increasing tendency over time (and no backlash following 9/11) to recognize the rights of different religious groups. In the group of the religiously diverse Protestant countries, Switzerland has remained consistently restrictive from 1990 until 2008 (-0.68 at all three data points) while Great Britain and the Netherlands oscillated around +0.5 in the same period. Only Germany showed a noticeable shift from -0.41 in 1990 to a less restrictive approach (-0.05 in 2002), and a steadiness thereafter (-0.05 in 2008) (Minkenberg, 2018: figure 1b). Evidently, the politics of recognition benefited from the change of government in 1998 caused by the Christian Democrats losing the federal election and the formation of the Red-Green coalition, just as the latter's more welcoming approach to the Muslim community in Germany has benefited from the churches' growing acceptance of multiculturalism.

## Conclusion

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Inherited church–state regimes are not immutable, even in a fixed democratic setting. In countries without a separationist regime but with high levels of diversity and/or strong pluralization, the pressures to disentangle church and state are likely to increase because of the democratic mechanisms at work (as the Swedish example shows). That said, the German case reveals a noticeable stubbornness with respect to its own model. The ↪ majority churches continue to decline, religious pluralization increases, and policies change, but the ‘limping separation’ continues to limp. On the positive side, this does not seem to be a serious impediment to democracy and in particular to accommodating new religious minorities. While it may still be the case that ‘German government treats different religions differently’ (Fox, 2008: 129), the examination of selected policy fields has shown movement towards a greater accommodation of Islam. More troubling is a growing legitimacy problem for the overly privileged majority churches (von Beyme, 2015: 227–32).

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## Notes

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- 1 'Estates' were part of the feudal order of the Middle Ages and usually comprised three categories (roughly equivalent to social classes): the clergy, the nobility, and the peasantry (later also the mercantile or urban middle class).

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CHAPTER

## 37 Ireland and the United Kingdom

Gladys Ganiel, Martin Steven

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### Abstract

This chapter examines the role of religion in Ireland and the United Kingdom in four stages, focusing on how divisions between Protestantism and Catholicism have contributed to political tensions and, at times, violence: (a) from the colonization of Ireland by Britain until the end of the Irish Civil War in 1923, when religion was used both to justify colonialism and to oppose it; (b) state-building in the early twentieth century, when religion impacted politics and society in ways that diverged from the wider European Christian democratic movement; (c) a period of secularization in the late twentieth century; and (d) a period of religious change, but at the same time persistence, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. It concludes by examining the impact of religion on the 2016 Brexit referendum vote, arguing that Brexit has destabilized political and religious relationships between the islands, with particular reference to Northern Ireland and Scotland.

**Keywords:** [Brexit](#), [Catholicism](#), [colonization](#), [Ireland](#), [secularization](#), [United Kingdom](#), [violence](#)

**Subject:** [History of Religion](#), [Religion](#)

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THE religion and politics of the islands of Britain and Ireland have been intertwined for centuries. Ireland was a conquest of the British Empire. The most intense period of colonization, the ‘plantations’ of the early seventeenth century, occurred shortly after the triumph of the Protestant Reformation in England, Scotland, and Wales. The Reformation had not taken root in Ireland and had assumed different forms in England and Wales (Anglicanism) and Scotland (Presbyterianism). This ensured that during the plantations, religion became an important component of difference. The Act of Union of 1801 created a new, ostensibly unified state: the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The Irish War of Independence (1919–21) resulted in the withdrawal of Britain from the twenty-six southern counties of the island and the creation of the Irish Free State, which became the Republic of Ireland in 1937. The six counties of what is now Northern Ireland, which had a Protestant majority, remained in the United Kingdom (UK).

This chapter examines the role of religion in these neighbouring islands in four stages: (a) the plantations until the end of the Irish Civil War in 1923, when religion was used both to justify colonialism and to oppose it; (b) state-building in the early twentieth century, when religion impacted politics and society in ways that

diverged from the wider European Christian democratic movement; (c) a period of secularization in the late twentieth century; and (d) a period of religious change and religious persistence in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. It concludes by examining the impact of religion on the 2016 Brexit referendum vote, arguing that Brexit has destabilized political and religious relationships between the islands.

## Religion, colonialism, and resistance: Ireland and the UK until 1923

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Prior to the Reformation, relationships between the two islands had been tumultuous at times. But when England, Wales, and Scotland embraced the Reformation, and Ireland ↴ did not, this added a further layer of difference between them. During Britain's ambitious plantation of Ireland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, religion was used to divide 'settler' and 'native', and to justify violence (Ruane and Todd, 1996; Connolly, 2008; Elliott, 2009).

In 1534, Henry VIII of England (r. 1509–47) established a Protestant Church of England (MacCulloch, 2000), which became the official church of England and Wales. Henry had defied the pope, who had refused to grant him an annulment for his first marriage to Catherine of Aragon. The daughter of Henry and Catherine, Mary I (r. 1553–8), however, was Catholic and attempted to reverse the English Reformation during her brief five-year reign. After her death, the daughter of Henry and Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1603), consolidated the English Reformation. Scotland's Reformation was different. John Knox (c.1514–72), a Protestant cleric, fled to Geneva during the reign of Mary I, where he came under the influence of John Calvin. When Knox returned to Scotland in 1559, he promoted a Presbyterian form of church government; in 1560, the Presbyterian Church became the established Church of Scotland.

In a wider geopolitical context of division and violence among Catholic and Protestant nations on the continent, Britain perceived Catholic Ireland as a security threat. From about 1556 to 1620, Britain initiated a plantation project in Ireland, settling loyal subjects in an effort to pacify the island and consolidate the power of the crown. The most ambitious was the plantation of Ulster in the north-east. This is usually dated to 1606, during the reign of James I of England, who was also James VI of Scotland (r. 1566–1625). Unlike other plantations in Ireland, significant numbers of Scottish settled in Ulster, making Presbyterianism the dominant Protestant tradition of the region. Many Catholics were dispossessed.

James' son Charles I (r. 1625–49) was unable to contain the religious and ethnic differences of England, Scotland, and Ireland, presiding over a period of unrest known as the Wars of the Three Kingdoms (1639–51). Charles' forces were defeated in the English Civil War (1642–5), and Charles was executed for treason. The monarchy was abolished and Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658), a Puritan, became Lord Protector. Cromwell invaded Ireland, defeating Catholic royalists who had aligned themselves with Charles II (r. 1660–85). Cromwell's campaign in Ireland (1649–53) is remembered for its scorched-earth policy that saw thousands die from military conquest, starvation, and disease.

The monarchy was restored in 1660 under Charles II. When Charles II died without an heir, his Catholic brother James II (r. 1685–1701) became king. English leaders invited the Dutch Prince of Orange, William (r. 1689–1702), who had married James' Protestant daughter Mary, to invade England, deposing James in the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688. James fled to Ireland and established an army with French support, but William defeated him in the Williamite War in Ireland (1689–91). James' Catholic supporters in highland Scotland were also defeated. These were important episodes not only for the consolidation of Protestant power across the two islands, but also in the Nine Years' War (1688–97) between France and the European coalition with which William was aligned.

From the early to mid-seventeenth century, Catholics and 'dissenting' Protestants who did not identify with the established Church of England were subject to 'penal laws'. Catholics and dissenters were ineligible

p. 650 for public office and employment, or military office. There were laws against participation in Catholic worship and 'conventicles', ↪ meetings for unauthorized worship, which restricted the practices of dissenters. Penal laws were also applied in Ireland, where they affected Catholics, Presbyterians and other 'non-conformist' dissenters who did not identify with the established Church of Ireland, which was Anglican like the Church of England. In both Britain and Ireland, the penal laws were enforced with various degrees of enthusiasm and effectiveness. But for around two centuries, until almost all were nullified by the Catholic Relief Act (1791) and the Catholic Emancipation Act (1829), the penal laws ensured that significant parts of the population faced discrimination and oppression on religious grounds.

The 'United Irish' rebellion of 1798 was organized by Catholics and Presbyterians, angry at their disenfranchisement and inspired by the American and French revolutions (McBride, 1998). The rebellion was strongest in Ulster and Leinster but was ultimately defeated by crown forces. It precipitated the Act of Union (1801), creating the United Kingdom of Great Britain (England, Scotland, and Wales) and Ireland. After 1798, Presbyterians increasingly ceased to identify with revolutionary radicalism and with Catholics; they became ever more incorporated into an overarching Protestant identity that defined itself over and against Catholicism. By this time, the power of monarchs had waned across Europe in relation to parliaments, and the UK was part of this democratizing trend. Democratization also brought with it the disestablishment of official churches across Europe. The Church of Ireland was disestablished in 1870, and the Church in Wales was separated from the Church of England and disestablished in 1920. The Church of England has never been disestablished while the Church of Scotland has retained an ambiguous political status since it merged with the Free Church in 1929—it is recognized legally as the national church but is free from state interference.

Catholic Emancipation meant that Catholics could now sit in the Westminster Parliament (Wolffe, 1994; Hempton, 1996). By the latter decades of the nineteenth century, the Irish Parliamentary Party was the major Irish party in Westminster. It agitated for 'home rule' for Ireland, as a result of which Ireland would have its own national parliament within the UK. Home rule bills were defeated in 1886 and 1893. The introduction of a third home rule bill in the House of Commons in 1912 provoked popular mobilization in Ireland. In Ulster, 'unionists' who were primarily Protestant, opposed home rule with the pithy slogan: 'Home rule is Rome rule'. This captured their fear that an Irish parliament would be controlled by the Catholic Church, restricting Protestants' civil and religious liberties. Unionists produced a home rule protest document called the 'Ulster Covenant', which was launched with great fanfare in September 1912, with public signings by political and church leaders. There were different versions for men and women; combined, about 500,000 people signed. Militant unionists imported arms from Germany and organized an Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), threatening to violently resist home rule. Nationalists, primarily Catholic and in favour of home rule, formed the Irish Volunteers, which also imported arms from Germany. The home rule crisis was left unresolved at the outbreak of the First World War (1914–18). Most of the UVF joined the British Army and were incorporated in the 36th Ulster Division, which suffered heavy losses at the Battle of the Somme in July 1916.

p. 651 Radical Irish republicans saw the UK's involvement in the war as an opportunity for rebellion. On Easter Monday 1916, a small alliance declared an Irish Republic and seized ↪ key locations in Dublin. The rebellion did not have widespread support and was defeated after six days. But when the leaders of the rebellion were executed, public opinion turned against the British. The rebellion became known as the Easter Rising, a name that links Christ's rising at Easter with the rising of the Irish nation. At the next elections in 1918, the Irish Parliamentary Party was crushed by the republican Sinn Féin party, which refused to take seats in Westminster and instead declared Irish independence. Between 1919 and 1921 the Irish Republican Army (IRA) fought a guerrilla war against the British Army and the Royal Irish Constabulary. Known as the Irish War of Independence, it concluded with a Treaty that established an Irish Free State as a self-governing dominion within the British Empire. Six of the nine counties of Ulster, with an overall Protestant majority,

opted out of the Free State. This region became known as Northern Ireland and remained part of the UK. In the Free State, opinion was divided, resulting in a civil war (1922–3) between the pro-treaty Free State government and the anti-treaty IRA, who believed the ideal of an Irish Republic had been betrayed. Supported with resources and weapons from the British government, Free State forces won the civil war. Two political parties emerged from the civil war: pro-treaty Fine Gael and anti-treaty Fianna Fáil; these remain Ireland's largest political parties and have ensured that Irish politics have not divided along conventional left–right European patterns. Northern Ireland was granted a parliament after partition, and political parties were formed along ethno–religious lines. The Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) controlled this parliament until it was prorogued during the Troubles in 1972.

In sum, the Reformation introduced religious differences which overlapped with ethnic, political, and power differentials between Britain and Ireland; and between settlers and dispossessed in Ireland. State power reinforced religious discrimination against Catholics and dissenters on both islands. Simply put, religion structured the division and violence that plagued the two islands. At the same time, religious ideas were used to construct identities and ideologies over and against the other, and to oppose and justify colonialism. Catholicism was a strong point of resistance to colonialism and became one of the defining features of Irish national identity (Foster, 1988; Ferriter, 2005; McMaster, 2012). Not only in Ireland but around the world, the British Empire framed its colonial enterprise in terms of bringing civilization, commerce and (Protestant) Christianity to so-called unenlightened peoples. Other European powers also developed similarly religious–infused ideologies (Hastings, 1997).

## Religion and state-building in the early twentieth century

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While the bond of statehood between the two islands had been severed, relationships continued to be intertwined, most obviously through Northern Ireland's continued position in the UK. And unlike other European nations, neither island was significantly influenced by the Christian democratic movement that developed after the Second World War (Kalyvas, 1996; Steven, 2019). Elsewhere Christian democratic parties developed that drew inspiration from Christian (primarily Catholic) teachings on social and economic justice and family values. These parties did not have formal relationships with churches and over time became pragmatic and secular. Yet their vision, which was in part inspired by Christian ideals, underlay the establishment of European social democracies and the European Union itself (Jansen and Van Hecke, 2011). But even in the absence of Christian democracy, religion continued to influence politics, society, and national identities on the islands.

The Irish Free State was decidedly not British and, especially, not Protestant. The Catholic Church was not an officially established religion, but the state gave it extraordinary power in education and health, and Mass-going and popular devotions seemed almost universal (Whyte, 1971; Inglis, 1998; Fuller, 2002). Many Irishmen, Catholic as well as Protestant, had fought in the British Army during the First World War. This inconvenient fact was overlooked in the process of state-building. In 1932, Fianna Fáil gained control of government and was to remain the dominant party well into the twenty-first century. For decades, Catholic social teaching influenced government policies and strict censorship laws shielded Ireland from foreign (especially British) influences. The Catholic Church was given a 'special position' in Ireland's 1937 Constitution. Ireland became a Republic in 1948, ending official links with the Commonwealth. During the Second World War (1939–45), Ireland declared itself neutral. This was a source of consternation to the British government, although again Irishmen fought in the British Army. After the war, it might have been assumed that Christian democracy would find fertile ground in Catholic Ireland. That said, the policies of both Ireland's main parties were already influenced by Catholic social teaching.

Unlike some other European countries, the UK's political parties had survived the war, so continuing to build the state along modern, democratic lines did not require new parties. The state's history of institutionalized anti-Catholicism may also have resisted identification with a Christian democratic tradition whose primary inspiration was Catholic. Indeed, some state structures remained anti-Catholic, with a continued bar on the monarch being Catholic or even marrying one. There also was a strong association between the Conservative Party and the Church of England; and Nonconformist Protestants were more likely to vote for the Liberal Party. Catholics, on the other hand, were (and remain) more likely to vote Labour. This is related to Labour's mobilization of immigrant Irish Catholics around the home rule issue in the early twentieth century, as well as the predominantly working-class profile of Catholics at that time. Catholicism's association with a party of the left like Labour reverses dominant European patterns in which Catholics are more likely to vote for centre-right Christian democratic parties (Tilley, 2015).

p. 653 Labour won the first post-war election and set about inaugurating a modern welfare state, complete with a National Health Service. Britain's welfare state was 'a Christian as well as secular vision'; some Christians believed 'the welfare ideal was an extension of Christian aims' (van Kersbergen, 1995; Woodhead, 2012: 14). This is captured in the oft-quoted remark by Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson (1974–6) that British socialism 'owed far more to Methodism than to Marx' (Wilson, 1964: 1). Methodism, which began as a reform movement within Anglicanism in the eighteenth century, was concerned with both the material and spiritual welfare of the poor. As the welfare state bedded down, churches surrendered control of institutions and resources that were necessary for it to function. Over time, this meant churches' distinctive contributions in areas like health and education were eroded, and the welfare state itself became something of 'an ideology, a belief, an ethic' (Woodhead, 2012: 10). In Northern Ireland, politics remained rigidly segregated along ethno-religious lines (Mitchel, 2003; Mitchell, 2005). The UUP was the dominant party of the period, maintaining links with a Protestant fraternal association, the Orange Order, and drawing on an almost exclusively Protestant constituency. The small Nationalist party, almost exclusively representing Catholics, had little influence in Northern Ireland's parliament or in government at any level.

While not as seemingly all-encompassing as Catholicism in the Republic, Christianity remained an important aspect of national identities in the UK during this period. This was most obvious in Northern Ireland, which developed two oppositional and competing 'civil religions'. A civil religion identifies a religion with a state or community, providing that political unit with a 'semi-sacred quality' (Ganiel and Jones, 2012: 317). These were Catholicism, which overlapped with nationalist/republican political identity; and Protestantism, which overlapped with unionist/loyalist political identity and was heavily influenced by Calvinism and evangelicalism. Evangelicalism, a Protestant reform movement that emerged in the eighteenth century, is best known for its emphasis on the Bible and its insistence that all must be 'born again' to become Christians. Evangelicals gained influential positions in unionist politics.

Some form of Protestantism also functioned as civil religions in England, Scotland, and Wales. Religion's place in social and political life seemed to hold steady through the Second World War; indeed, there was a 'notion of the war as a fight for a Christian civilisation based on common sense, decency and social justice' (Brown, 2006: 163; Wood, 2019). While Bruce (2011: 66–8) contests this reading of the mid-twentieth century, arguing for significant religious declines beginning a century earlier, the years 1945–56 marked 'one of the most concerted periods of church growth since the middle of the nineteenth century' (Brown, 2006: 188). Evangelicalism gained momentum, exemplified in the 1950s 'crusades' of American evangelist Billy Graham, which drew crowds in their thousands—representing a refreshing of the broader church through less formal liturgical practices. At the same time, the significant Catholic minority in Greater Glasgow and the West Central Belt meant that, up to a point, the Church of Scotland was in some ways 'forced to share its self-proclaimed status as "the national church" with the Roman Catholic Church' (Brown and Lynch, 2012: 344).

More broadly, the absence of a Christian democratic movement led to a divergence between the UK and Ireland and the wider patterns of religion and politics in Europe. That said, the influence of religion on politics, society and national identities remained significant, if varied, across the islands through the middle of the twentieth century.

p. 654

## Secularization: divergence and convergence in the late twentieth century

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In the latter half of the twentieth century, secularization became the dominant paradigm for understanding religion in Europe, Britain, and to some extent, Ireland (Wilson, 1966; Brown, 2009; Bruce, 2011; Pollack and Rosta, 2017). Some considered secularization an almost inevitable process that would culminate in the marginalization, if not extinction, of religion. The Republic and Northern Ireland diverged from this pattern, maintaining much higher levels of religious belief and practice alongside the public prominence of Christian institutions and leaders (Fuller, 2002; Ganiel, 2016). By the 1960s and 1970s, it seemed there was a noticeable religious divergence between a secularizing UK and an exceptionally religious island of Ireland. Yet by the 1990s, there was increasing evidence of convergence: Ireland and Northern Ireland seemed to be ‘catching up’ with Britain and the rest of Europe.

Secularization has been defined or measured in four main ways: (a) the separation of religious and state power; more commonly known in European terms as the separation of church and state; (b) a decreasing public role for religion; (c) an increasing privatization of religion; and (d) declines in markers of religious devotion such as identifying oneself as having a religion, attending religious services, and belief in God and specific doctrines. Secularization is considered bound up with the large-scale economic, social, and political processes of Western modernization, including industrialization, increased economic prosperity, and an expanded franchise.

In terms of the separation of church and state, churches in Ireland and Wales had been disestablished by the early twentieth century, signalling an official secularization of governmental structures. The Church of England has never been disestablished and retains certain privileges, such as bishops sitting in the House of Lords and pride of place at state functions like royal weddings. The Church of Scotland retains many of these ceremonial privileges but without representation in parliament. At its annual General Assembly each May, itself frequently likened to a national parliament prior to devolution, the Queen either attends or is formally represented but observes from a throne gallery above proceedings. Yet few would argue that either the Church of England or Scotland retains significant power to influence politics or even social mores and practices (see Steven, 2011). In contrast, until the 1990s, Catholicism seemed so dominant in the Republic as to function at times like an established religion; Inglis (1998) described it as exerting a ‘moral monopoly’ on Irish life.

p. 655

The public role of religion in England, Scotland, and Wales declined significantly over the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries; this also happened in the Republic and Northern Ireland. But because the influence of the Catholic Church in Ireland remained strong for a longer period, this was most striking in the Republic, where Catholic social teachings that had been enshrined in law were one by one overturned: divorce was legalized in 1995, same-sex marriage was approved by popular referendum in 2015, and a constitutional ban on abortion in all but the most restrictive circumstances was removed—once again by popular referendum—in 2018. This happened alongside evidence of privatization, individualization, and liberalization of religion on both islands; in some cases, reformers within the churches themselves pushed for a liberalization of religion that would be more compatible with modernity (Wood, 2019; Ganiel, 2020a).



Declines in markers of religious devotion have been starker in the UK than in the Republic and Northern Ireland and occurred earlier, accelerating from the 1960s. In 1950, membership of the Church of England was 6.7 per cent of the population of England and Wales, declining to 3.7 per cent in 1980 and 2.5 per cent in 2000. The membership figures for Scotland at these dates were 24.9 per cent, 18.7 per cent, and 11.9 per cent (Guest, Olson, and Wolffe, 2012: 62). Figures for weekly church attendance also continued to decline (see Table 37.1).

The UK Census did not include a question about religion until 2001, when ‘an unexpectedly large number’—72 per cent—identified as Christian (Davie, 2015: 43). Yet by the 2011 Census, this figure had dropped to 59 per cent. At the same time, the proportion of those identifying as ‘no religion’ in the two censuses climbed from 15 per cent to 25 per cent. The more frequent British Social Attitudes Survey charted the rise of ‘no religion’ from 31.4 per cent (1983), 36.8 per cent (1993), 43.4 per cent (2003), 50.6 per cent (2013) and 52 per cent (2018) (see National Centre for Social Research, 2018: 2; Woodhead, 2016: 246). Linda Woodhead has called those who identify as no religion ‘a new cultural majority’, whose values are marked by an ‘ethical liberalization’ that prizes individual freedom. She linked this to wider processes of pluralization in British society and a conservative reaction by Christian leaders across denominations, who failed to grasp that ethical liberalization could be compatible with Christian values (Woodhead, 2016: 256). Voas (2015) called this a ‘normalization of non-religion’, noting that no religion is common across all social categories (class, gender, and so on). In addition, Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead (2005) argued that alternative spiritualities were becoming embedded in British life, impacting society in implicit and unexpected ways.

p. 656 At the same time there was an increase in religious pluralism, in part due to immigration, to the extent that Grace Davie (2015: 59) claimed that ‘in European terms, Britain is more rather than less diverse from a religious point of view’. Fuller accounts of Britain’s religious diversity are available in Davie (2015) and Woodhead and Catto (2012: ch. 3); suffice to say that Muslims were the largest non-Christian religion in the 2011 Census (4.8 per cent of the population of England and Wales), and that religious diversity varies significantly by region, with London the most diverse. Muslims have been framed as a threat to British identity and values (at times assumed as Christian); other discourses have cast Islam as an inherently violent religion, creating an ‘Islamophobia’ in some sectors of society (see Lewis and Hamid, 2018).

**Table 37.1** Church attendance in Great Britain, 1980–2015 (%)

	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
England	11.1	10.2	9.4	8.3	7.2	6.3	5.5	4.7
Scotland	17.1	16.6	14.7	13.3	11.9	11.0	9.9	8.9
Wales	14.1	12.9	10.6	9.0	7.7	6.7	5.8	4.8

Source: British Religion in Numbers.

Political leaders have varied in their public engagement—or lack thereof—with religion. Tony Blair (Prime Minister 1997–2007) was known as a committed Christian, but his political advisors urged him to keep his faith private. In 2003, communications strategist Alastair Campbell interrupted an interview in which Blair was asked about his faith saying, ‘We don’t do God’ (Brown, 2003). And while the press regularly referred to Theresa May (Prime Minister, 2016–19), as a ‘vicar’s daughter’, May only occasionally spoke about her faith in public, most memorably in interviews that covered how she came to terms with the death of her parents

and her inability to have children (Hope, 2017). Such reticence seems down to a desire not to alienate Britain's no religion and minority religion populations. Gordon Brown, meanwhile (Prime Minister, 2007–10), was a notable 'son of the manse' — his father was a Church of Scotland minister. Perhaps more than May, he was willing to articulate how his Presbyterian upbringing had helped define his political views although again, this was tempered by a familiar reluctance to appear overly religious (Brown, 2007).

In the Republic, declines have not been as steep but became more obvious in the late 1990s, when the Republic began to approach (and eventually surpassed) typical European levels of modernization and economic prosperity. Other factors included the changing role of women, a media that was increasingly critical of the Catholic Church, and the impact of the clerical sexual abuse scandals, which has been profound in Ireland (exposing evidence of widespread abuse and 'cover-up') (Inglis, 1998; Ganiel, 2016, 2019a). The percentage of those identifying as Catholic first dipped under 90 per cent in the early 1990s and is now at 78 per cent, according to the 2016 Census. Mass attendance fell from 91 per cent in 1972 to 36 per cent in the 2016 European Values Survey. The latest Census also found that more people are choosing to identify as 'no religion' or 'not stated'. In 2016, this was 12 per cent, up from 8 per cent in 2011 and 6 per cent in 2006.<sup>1</sup> Table 37.2 shows how Irish society has rapidly become more multicultural and diverse with regard to the range of faiths with which people identify.

p. 657

In Northern Ireland, the Troubles (c.1968–98) may have functioned to keep religious identification and observance higher than they might otherwise have been. In the late 1960s, Catholic nationalists, who remained systematically disadvantaged by the state, began a peaceful civil rights movement. They met a violent response from the police and some vigilantes, leading to widespread rioting, violence, and the deployment of the British Army. There followed a communal conflict between republican and loyalist paramilitary groups, and the British State, that claimed more than 3,600 lives. The conflict was not 'religious' in that it was not about differences in Catholic and Protestant doctrines. But religion structured the ethno-national divisions and political goals: Protestant unionists wished to remain in the UK, while Catholic nationalists wanted to be part of a united Ireland. Religio-political ideologies and social practices centred around churches reaffirmed communal boundaries and gave meaning to ethno-national identity (Mitchell, 2005; Brewer, Higgins, and Teeney, 2011). A Calvinist-tinged evangelicalism exerted a disproportionate influence on unionist politics and identity, exemplified in the Reverend Ian Paisley, who started his own denomination, the Free Presbyterian Church, and political party, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), which remains the largest party in Northern Ireland (Bruce, 2007; Ganiel, 2008).

**Table 37.2** Religious denominations in the Republic of Ireland, 2011 and 2016 (000s)

Denomination	2011	2016
Roman Catholic	3,861.3	3,729.1
No religion	269.8	468.4
Church of Ireland	129.0	126.4
Not stated	72.9	125.3
Other	70.2	97.7
Muslim	49.2	63.4
Orthodox	45.2	62.2
Christian	41.2	37.4
Presbyterian	24.6	24.2
Hindu	10.7	14.3
Pentecostal	14.0	13.4

Source: Census—Central Statistics Office of Ireland.

The end of the Troubles seems to have precipitated a more rapid decline in measures of religiosity, although this has not been the only factor (Nic Ghiolla Phádraig, 2009; Hayes and Dowds, 2010). Mass attendance declined from 95 per cent in 1968 to 81 per cent in 1998 to 46 per cent in 2019, with significant urban/rural regional variation. Identification as Catholic has held steady in the low 40 per cent-range. Among Protestants, churchgoing fell from 52 per cent in 1998 to 46 per cent in 2019. Between 1998 and 2008 those identifying with Protestant traditions declined from 59 per cent to 50 per cent. The decline in Protestant identification can to some extent be explained by demographic trends such as lower birth rates and higher death and emigration rates; Protestants dipped under 50 per cent of the population for the first time in 2012. Those who identify as no religion stand at 20 per cent in 2019, up from 13 per cent in 2008 and 9 per cent in 1998.<sup>2</sup>

In sum, any convergence of patterns of secularization between the two islands should be very much qualified, even if there are indications that the island of Ireland is ‘catching up’. It also should be acknowledged that historically Catholic majority countries tend to display lower measures of secularization than Protestant countries, another factor to take into account when comparing Ireland and the UK (Wilkins-Lafamme, 2016).

## Religious change and religious persistence in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries

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By the latter part of the twentieth century, scholars were challenging the secularization paradigm, noting an increased diversification, individualization, and liberalization of religion (Davie, 2007; Woodhead and Catto, 2012; Doggett and Arat, 2018). Such trends were observed on both islands, alongside evidence that religion continues to structure voting patterns, not just in Northern Ireland where this is glaringly obvious, but also in the wider UK.

Davie's concepts of 'believing without belonging' (1994) and 'vicarious religion' (2000) have been among the most important for understanding how religion has retained some significance in British life. She defined believing without belonging as individuals maintaining belief in God and other Christian ideas, but with little or no participation in church activities. She further conceived religion as a form of collective memory, perpetuated by the institutional churches, educational systems, and media. Such was the foundation for vicarious religion, which is 'religion performed by an active minority but on behalf of a much larger number, *who implicitly at least not only understand, but quite clearly approve of what the minority is doing*' (Davie, 2007: 127). Building on and critiquing Davie's work, Abby Day (2011) used the term 'believing in belonging', arguing that people were creating religious meaning through relationships, with each other or even the deceased. Day emphasized that some continue to identify with institutional Christianity, an identification used to 'strengthen the perception of the UK as a Christian country', in opposition to religious and ethnic 'others' (Day, 2011: 189). She created the concept of 'performative belief', which described how beliefs preserved by an institutional church have a 'role in bringing into being forms of identity' (Day, 2010: 10). Other concepts like lived religion, deinstitutionalized religion, implicit religion, and post-secularism, among others, also have been used to explain religious change and persistence in the UK (Doggett and Arat, 2018). Such analyses have been challenged by those who emphasize overall markers of decline, particularly among younger generational cohorts (Voas and Crockett, 2005; Bruce and Voas, 2010; Bruce, 2020). Davie (2015: 3–4) acknowledged the tensions between analysing change and persistence alongside evidence of secularization, identifying six 'factors to take into account' when considering these complexities, including both the historic role of the churches in shaping British society and the arrival into Britain of groups of people from many different parts of the world and with very different religious aspirations from those seen in the host society.

At the same time, voting for the UK's main political parties continues to be structured along denominational lines laid down in the early twentieth century, with practising Anglicans more likely to vote Conservative, Catholics to vote Labour, and Nonconformists to vote Liberal Democrat. Controlling for class and other variables, James Tilley (2015: 923) concluded that 'religious voting is a relic of past associations between groups and parties' and has been passed on primarily through parental socialization. In Northern Ireland, the ethno-religious structure of the region's main political parties remained after the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, itself considered the end of the Troubles. Within six years of the Agreement, however, the more 'extreme' parties, Sinn Féin and the DUP, had overtaken their rivals within their communal voting blocs—surpassing the very parties that had negotiated the Agreement. Studies of religion in Northern Ireland focused on the churches' role in peace-making; most concluded that individuals and organizations working outside denominational structures had been the most effective (Ganiel, 2008; Brewer, Higgins, and Teeney, 2011). Others found religion remained more significant to identity and politics in Northern Ireland than in the Republic (Todd, 2018)

In the Republic, the breakdown of the Catholic Church's authority dominated analysis of religious change and persistence. Tom Inglis (2014: 126–49) argued that Catholics were fragmenting into four types: (a) orthodox (people who 'both believe and belong'); (b) cultural (people who 'neither strongly believe in the church nor feel that they belong to it,' yet maintain some beliefs and participate in Catholic rites of

passage); (c) creative (people who mix and match their beliefs and practices from Catholicism with a variety of spiritual sources); and (d) disenchanted (people who oppose the Church). He concluded that while Catholicism was no longer part of people's everyday 'cultural repertoires', it remained a major 'cultural ingredient' used to 'mark major life transitions, to celebrate, and to mourn' (Inglis, 2014: 188). Gladys Ganiel (2016: 230) described 'a shift in consciousness in which the institutional Catholic Church is no longer held in high esteem by most of the population, no longer so feared by Protestants, and cannot automatically expect to exert its influence in social and political life'. Yet she recognized the continued significance of Catholicism, developing the concept of 'extra-institutional religion' to describe how people practise religion 'outside or in addition to the Catholic Church', creating alternative institutional or quasi-institutional spaces to express their faith (Ganiel, 2016: 5, 2019b). Drawing on and adapting religious market theories, she argued that Ireland has a 'mixed' religious market, where people's choices are shaped and even dominated by the Catholic Church. Both Inglis' types of Catholics and Ganiel's extra-institutional practitioners confirm the diversification, individualization, and liberalization of religion on the island, but reveal persistence as well as decline.

## Conclusion

The British and Irish governments worked together in the negotiations that produced the 1998 Good Friday Agreement; to some extent their joint efforts mitigated the historic power imbalances between the two states. But the June 2016 Brexit referendum, in which the UK voted to leave the EU, destabilized relationships between Britain and Ireland, between Northern Ireland and the Republic, and between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland (Todd, 2017). Because a majority in Scotland voted Remain, it also destabilized relationships between Britain and Scotland, raising the issue of a second referendum for Scottish independence.<sup>3</sup> There are four main reasons why Brexit has threatened relationships between Ireland and the UK: (a) as in Scotland, a majority in Northern Ireland voted Remain; (b) the spectre of a return of a hard, even militarized, border between Northern Ireland and the Republic signalled a possible return to violence; (c) until 2019, the pro-Brexit DUP was integral to the Conservative majority in Westminster, meaning the British government could be considered to favour unionism in matters concerning Northern Ireland; and (d) some nationalists/republicans see Brexit as a gateway to a referendum on a united Ireland.

In important ways, religion structured how people voted on Brexit. This was most obvious in Northern Ireland, where 56 per cent of the population voted Remain, including 85 per cent of Catholics but only 40 per cent of Protestants (Garry, 2017: 2). The dramatic difference between Catholic and Protestant perspectives on Brexit adds another layer of political disagreement to the historic mix—one that is amplified by controversy over a so-called 'Irish sea border' between Northern Ireland and the UK since the UK's 2020 exit from the EU; and/or the prospects of a united Ireland referendum.

In England, a post-Brexit referendum survey found that those who identified as Church of England were more likely to vote Leave, alongside other variables such as age, class, and living outside London. Other surveys conducted before the referendum, and asking how people would vote, confirmed that Anglicans were more likely to favour Leave than other religious groups, and that most evangelicals—many of whom would be heirs to nonconformist traditions—favoured Remain (Smith and Woodhead, 2016). Analysis of the 2016 British Election Study Referendum Panel confirmed that Anglicans were more likely to vote Leave, with religion affecting both their utilitarian assessments of the costs and benefits of EU membership and their affective attachment (or non-attachment) to the EU; Baptists and Methodists (who could be identified with the non-conformist and/or evangelical traditions) were more likely to vote Remain, as were Catholics. However, the survey showed that support for the EU was weaker among Catholics in Britain than elsewhere in Europe (Kolpinskaya and Fox, 2019: 9–10).

Though religion's impact on the Brexit vote is more complex than can be conveyed through survey results, the evidence for religion's significance on this issue alerts us to the ways it continues to shape identities and relationships on these islands. Brexit may prove to be the defining political process for both islands over the course of the twenty-first century, not least because of the threat it poses to previously improving political and religious relationships.

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## Notes

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- 1 The Census includes categories of lapsed Catholic, atheist, agnostic, and lapsed Church of Ireland, which we added to ‘no religion’ and ‘not stated.’ If only ‘no religion’ and ‘not stated’ are calculated, the figure is just under 10 per cent.
- 2 Data from Northern Ireland Life and Times Surveys.
- 3 In 2014, a referendum for Scottish independence was defeated.

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## The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Europe

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### CHAPTER

## 38 Italy

Claudio Ferlan, Marco Ventura

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### Abstract

The history of religion in Italy reveals both a continuing Catholic presence and growing religious diversity. This chapter traces this history from medieval times, through early modern, pre-unification Italy, to the struggle for unity, the forcible end of the Pontifical States, and the problematic coexistence of the Holy See, the Catholic Church, and the Kingdom of Italy after 1861. The later sections deal with the appeasement of the Holy See under fascist rule and the Lateran Pacts of 1929; then the transition from fascism to democracy and from monarchy to republic, through the referendum of 1946 and the Constitution of 1948. Central to this evolution is the explicit acknowledgment that Italy is no longer a Catholic state; conversely *laicità* is identified as the supreme constitutional principle. Since 1989, cultural Christianity and the consolidation of various forms of Catholic preference are learning to coexist with an increasingly multi-religious population.

**Keywords:** [Roman Catholic Church](#), [Christianity](#), [Italy](#), [Holy See](#), [church and state](#), [state religion](#), [secularization](#), [laicità](#), [diversity](#)

**Subject:** [History of Religion](#), [Religion](#)

**Series:** [Oxford Handbooks](#)

THE place of religion in Italian history, society, and politics is complex. To capture this long and changing story, this chapter is divided into five parts. The first part covers the medieval and early modern periods in pre-unification Italy. The second addresses the religious aspects of the struggle for national unity, the forcible end of the Pontifical States, and the problematic coexistence of the Holy See, the Catholic Church, and the unified Kingdom of Italy after 1861. The third part is devoted to the appeasement of the Holy See under fascist rule and the Lateran Pacts of 1929, on which the Vatican City State was founded. The fourth focuses on the transition from fascism to democracy and from monarchy to republic, including the referendum of 1946 and the constitution of 1948. This section traces the process leading from the tacit termination of the Catholic state in the 1948 constitution, through the explicit acknowledgement in the 1984 Concordat that Italy is no longer a Catholic state, to—finally—the 1989 decision by the Constitutional Court in which *laicità* is identified as the supreme constitutional principle. The fifth and final part looks at post-1989 developments and the tensions that have arisen in an increasingly multicultural and multi-religious Italy.

## Medieval and early modern Italy

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It is certainly possible to speak of 'religious' history in Italy before the unification of the peninsula: historical research has established that in the geographical space that became Italy after 1861, there is an unusually long continuity in religious life, closely linked to the identity of the society in question (Miccoli, 1974: 431). There is, moreover, a constant element in this narrative: the location of the papacy in Italy and the fact that an overwhelming majority of popes have been Italian, including an uninterrupted line from Clement VII (1523–34), elected in 1523 to John Paul I, who died in 1978.

p. 666 In the history of the peninsula, before unification, many different political structures succeeded one another, including the Carolingian and Holy Roman empires, medieval ↵ communes, city-states, regional states, and different types of republic. That said, a unifying element ran through all of these: the different ruling groups almost always influenced the ecclesiastical institutions and, at the same time, were influenced by them. The image of concentric circles conveys very well the continuous attention, assiduous care, and intense ties between the Church of Rome and Italian governments. For this reason, the history of ecclesiastical institutions is also a history of political power in the region (Miccoli and Chittolini, 1986: xix–xx). The starting point for this close relationship was the 'Peace of the Church' (313), an edict of tolerance determined by the Emperor Constantine (306–37), that allowed Christians the liberty to practise their religion without government repression. The edict publicly sanctioned the profound penetration of Christianity into Roman society. In the early centuries of Christianity, the primacy of the Patriarch of Rome did not involve the exercise of his personal and real power. This began to change when Leo I (440–61) initiated the argument in favour of the primacy of the Church of Rome over the other territorial churches, keeping in mind that the implementation of these formulations took place over several centuries (Fantappiè, 2011: 48–66).

Crucial in this process was the conflict between Pope Innocent IV (1243–54) and Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II (r. 1220–50). Innocent IV was a jurist and disputed the legitimacy of any power that was not based on Christ and therefore on papal recognition. From this perspective, the power of a non-Christian sovereign was illegitimate. At the same time, Innocent IV extended the prerogatives claimed by the pope as Vicar of Christ beyond the confines of Christianity, theorizing that as a matter of law all sovereigns were subject to the authority of Rome. The move of the papacy to Avignon, France (1307–77), the subsequent Western Schism (1378–1417), and the consequences of this conflict, which lasted more than a century, represent further crucial moments in Italian religious history. The Avignon papacy greatly strengthened the link between the Papal States and the Italian states, which chose to remain obedient to Rome, and from the middle of the fifteenth century, the papacy significantly consolidated its presence in Italian political society and in the government of local ecclesiastical institutions. The ancient 'patrimony of St Peter' (that is, the landed possessions of the Church, including the temporal power connected to them) were transformed into the Papal States, a temporal principality. In the decades between 1430 and 1450, the popes restricted the external interference of potentates and *condottieri* in their territory and reduced the autonomy of cities and local lords. They consolidated a civil government apparatus and renewed their financial structures, considerably increasing their revenues. In the following centuries, the popes had among their primary objectives the strengthening of the Papal States, understood as the material foundation of their freedom and sovereignty. As a result, the ancient closeness between the Holy See and Italy had far greater implications than in the past. The papacy presented itself as one Italian principality among the others, operating according to the same 'secular' logic, and acquiring a primary role in a unitary political system (Miccoli, 1974). The other Italian states recognized and accepted the new situation, on the one hand because of their atavistic weakness, and on the other because of their interest in maintaining as far as possible a regime of peaceful coexistence (Chittolini, 2004: 954–5).

p. 667 Over the course of many conflicts, up to and beyond Italian unification, the Papal States became an unavoidable interlocutor in the political arena of the peninsula. The fragmentation of Italy into a multiplicity of small states condemned the ruling classes and the elite to a featureless and provincial life. In this context, the papal household constituted for a long period—at least until the eighteenth-century Wars of Succession—a valid alternative to the lack of a real imperial court. The Roman Curia was organized around a system of congregations, offices and tribunals through which many families of the Italian nobility exercised considerable power. This expanded with the emergence of an increasingly articulated diplomatic system (the apostolic nunciatures), especially after the end of the Council of Trent (1545–63). Because of the political strengthening of the papacy in the early modern period, the ties between the Curia's milieu and the different local political and ecclesiastical societies of the peninsula intensified. A reciprocal exchange of fidelity and solidarity, at the political, economic, and financial levels, initiated relationships destined to consolidate over the centuries (Prodi, 1982).

Alongside the Papal States, bishops featured as another pole of power in the history of the Italian Church. In the Carolingian era (the eighth to ninth centuries), a long process began. Territorial sovereigns on the one hand, and priests and monks on the other, began first to collaborate, and then to integrate. In this way, the public functions and political tasks of the bishops were strengthened and they found themselves moving gradually closer to the military aristocracy (Miccoli, 1974: 447–64). Between the Middle Ages and the early modern age, the number of Italian dioceses, and therefore of bishops, was always high. They held real power, usually exercised in competition with other local political forces. When the Council of Trent attributed to the bishops the task of putting into practice new models of pastoral care, their role in the government of local churches was strengthened. In this context, the papacy imposed its sovereignty and was able to prevail in the competition with the governments of the peninsula (O'Malley, 2013).

Jurisdiction was the most delicate area in the power struggle between secular and ecclesiastical authorities. Bishops, and above all archbishops, had powers that went beyond the religious sphere. The political powers tried to control the ecclesiastical judges in a variety of ways, and with differing results. For centuries the ecclesiastical hierarchy at the lower level was fragmented into countless local cases characterized by a great deal of uncertainty in the distribution of power. Only between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries did the bishops obtain ordinary spiritual jurisdiction and were able to prevail over the other powers existing in the archdiocesan and diocesan territory. This also contributed to raising the economic power of the bishop (Donati, 1986).

Monasteries emerged as one of the most significant centres of power. Over the centuries, they gained a fundamental role in the economy, in culture, in politics, and in the military, becoming in addition the places where the most effective ecclesiastical hierarchies were formed. Jesuit colleges took on this role from the beginning of seventeenth century. Indeed, Jesuit schools became crucial training grounds, not only for the ecclesiastical elites, but also for many of the political equivalents (Ferlan, 2015). In many Italian regions, the monks acted in close agreement with the papacy, which granted them important privileges. Thus, they contributed both to the political affirmation ↵ of the regional and local forces loyal to the Church of Rome and to the fight against heretics. This was a particularly important function, given that since the Middle Ages, and even more in the age of Reformation, the so-called heretics were deemed to be in opposition to the religious system, and by implication to the civil and political organization (Pesce, 2018: 67–84). Repression of heretics, notably Protestants, was therefore a key feature of the Italian history, with many variations in time and space. It was in this context that the Jewish communities evolved, a key component in the life of the peninsula, and yet the object of harassment and persecution. A crisis between the local clergy and the monastic clergy occurred in the 1520s, when religious orders became a principal vehicle for spreading heterodox ideas. This happened mainly because of the culture and mobility of the friars. The crisis was resolved, however, with the strengthening of the religious orders. They increased their privileges and autonomy, and affirmed their alliance with the papacy. Only the reforming policy of civil governments in the eighteenth century changed the situation, with the marginalization and suppression of some orders, notably the Society of Jesus.

## From the French Revolution to the unification of Italy

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Prior to unification, the independent states of the Kingdom of Sardinia–Piedmont, of Lombardy–Venetia, the Principality of Parma, the Duchy of Modena and Reggio, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies shared a common feature—one which combined the two principles of *confessionismo cattolico* and *giurisdizionalismo* (Ruffini, 1982). Embracing the principle of *confessionismo cattolico*, each state identified itself as a Roman Catholic state. The *Statuto Albertino*, the 1848 constitution of the Kingdom of Sardinia–Piedmont, proclaimed that Roman Apostolic Catholicism was the ‘sole religion of the State’.<sup>1</sup> However, pre-unification states in Italy also shared a concern that the Church might undermine not only their sovereign prerogatives but their attempts at modernization. Thus, state policies aiming at controlling, limiting, or reforming the Church came into existence as a corollary of the principle of *confessionismo cattolico*. Such policies implied the jurisdiction of the state over the Church and were defined as *giurisdizionalismo*. The imposition on the bishops of an oath of allegiance to the king and to the nation, or the need of a civil exequatur in order for ecclesiastical measures to enjoy civil enforcement, both embodied the vision of *giurisdizionalismo*. The situation in the Pontifical States was however distinctive: in this state covering most of central Italy at the time of the struggle for unity, the pope was indeed the temporal as well as the spiritual ruler.

French rule over large parts of Italy after Napoleon’s campaigns changed the picture. By ousting the pope and by instituting his Repubblica Romana in 1798 Napoleon demonstrated that the Pontifical States were not untouchable, though he restored them one year later. Jewish and Protestant emancipation and the very idea of a common citizenship regardless of religion had a similar impact. French ideas and practices influenced the struggle for national unification very profoundly. A perfect example can be found in the crisis of 1848–9, when the pope fled from Rome and the short experience of the second Repubblica Romana advanced the ideas of democracy, civil liberties, and universal suffrage. The constitution of the Repubblica Romana of 1849 was the first ever in the country to abolish *cattolicesimo di stato*, state Catholicism, and to proclaim full religious freedom and equality of citizens regardless of their religious affiliation.

*Risorgimento*, the struggle for Italian unification, led from the bottom up by Italian patriots from all over the peninsula and from the top down by the Kingdom of Sardinia–Piedmont, had its first success with the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861; this was followed by the final defeat of the Pontifical States and the military conquest of Rome, which was proclaimed the capital city of the kingdom in 1870 (Beals and Biagini, 2002). In 1871 the parliament issued an act, commonly known as the Law of Papal Guarantees (*Legge delle Guarentigie*), through which Italy demonstrated that no harm would come from the new status quo, which had brought to an end the temporal power of the pope. Though the sovereignty of the Holy See was not formally acknowledged, this was nevertheless implicit in the act, with the proclamation of the right to send and receive diplomatic representatives granted in article 11. The act also promoted the freedom and independence of the Catholic Church: for the first time in the modern history of Italian states, Catholic bishops were not required to swear an oath of allegiance to the king (article 15) and no special constraint could be imposed on the gatherings of priests (article 14).

Before unity, what became known as the *questione romana* was the claim by *Risorgimento* patriots of the territorial integrity of unified Italy with Rome as the capital city. After unity, the *questione romana* became the clash between the newly born Kingdom of Italy and the pope who did not accept the forcible termination of his temporal power and the allegedly illegitimate annexation of his territories, Rome included. So much so that the pope called for the mobilization of international and internal public opinion in a war on the liberal Italian government.

With Catholicism representing the most pervasive cultural reference in the peninsula, and the Catholic Church being the most influential institution, the clash before and after unity necessarily concerned the temporal power of the pope, which was incompatible with the territorial unity of Italy under a unified modern, civil kingdom, and the strenuous defence of political and legal absolutism, which was incompatible with the doctrine of liberalism embraced by the Italian elite and post-unity governments. Thus, the newly formed unified state developed as a Catholic state by virtue of the 1848 constitution of the Kingdom of Sardinia–Piedmont which had become the constitution of Italy in 1861, but as a Catholic state challenged by fierce opposition from Catholics (Spadolini, 1972). The excommunication of both the king and the prime minister, Camillo Cavour (1810–61), and Pius IX's (1846–78) injunction to Italian Catholics to boycott the political life of unified Italy in 1868 embodied the dramatic clash between the Catholic Kingdom of Italy and the Catholic Church (Marongiu Buonaiuti, 1971).

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In line with their adhesion to political liberalism, post-unity Italian governments embraced the doctrine championed by Cavour, according to whom, Italy should follow the principle of 'libera chiesa in libero stato' ('a free church in a free state') (C. Cavour, Speech at the parliament of 27 March 1861 on Rome as the capital city of the Kingdom of Italy). Cavour was driven by his knowledge of and sympathy for Protestant claims about the separation of church and state, especially in the United States, in Switzerland, and in France. Thus, separation seemed to the elite of the *Risorgimento* to be the best way of guaranteeing both freedom of conscience and religion within the state as well as the freedom of the Catholic Church and other faith communities—these being either Jews or Protestant Christians of various denominations. In this sense, post-unity governments saw themselves in continuity with the changes promoted by King Carlo Alberto (r. 1831–49) in 1848, when in February the decrees known as *lettere patenti* had granted freedom and full civil rights to Waldensians (Piedmont Protestants traditionally persecuted by the House of Savoy), and in March the *Statuto Albertino* had provided for non-Catholic 'cults' to be 'tolerated', subject to the law (article 1). At the same time, Italian governments developed policies aimed at limiting the influence of the Catholic Church and expanding the powers of the state in areas traditionally reserved to the Church.



In the 1860s and 1870s legislative measures secularized public and private law. Civil marriage was introduced in the civil code of 1865. A system of public education was set up, based on state schools aimed at educating modern Italians in the values of national unity and public duties, in the secular religion of *Risorgimento*, and in the principles of liberalism. The 1889 penal code made the blasphemy law the same for all cults. The parliament adopted measures deliberately aimed at restricting the Catholic Church's influence, such as the suppression of religious orders, notably the Jesuits, and the confiscation of ecclesiastical properties (Jemolo, 1948).

By the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, both the most aggressive forms of state anti-clericalism and the fiercest Catholic opposition to the state were over, with Catholics increasingly taking part in the public life of the country. After 1880, the Work of the Congress (*Opera dei Congressi*) emerged as an influential network of Catholic organizations. Political parties with a Catholic inspiration and orientation were founded, in particular the Italian Christian Democracy (*Democrazia Cristiana Italiana*) in 1901 and the Italian People's Party (*Partito Popolare Italiano*) in 1919. At the same time, the Italian Socialist Party (*Partito Socialista Italiano*) was founded between 1892 and 1895 and the Italian Communist Party (*Partito Comunista Italiano*) in 1921. Reacting to the emergence of socialism and communism, Italian Catholics came to see their former liberal enemies as an indispensable ally against the Marxist threat. The alliance between the Catholics and the liberals in the elections of 1913 through the so-called Gentiloni Pact (*Patto Gentiloni*), the name of a Catholic politician close to Pope Pius X (1903–14), represented the de facto end of the Pontifical ban on Catholics' participation in general elections. With Catholic chaplains blessing soldiers who would fight for the homeland in the colonial wars in Libya and the Horn of Africa, and indeed in the First World War, the time was ripe for negotiations between the Italian government and the Holy See with the aim of finding a solution to the *questione romana* (Margiotta Broglio, 1966).

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## Fascist rule, the *Conciliazione*, and the Lateran Pacts

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Between 1922, when Benito Mussolini became prime minister, and 1943, when fascism fell and the transition to democracy began, Italy went through three momentous phases in its religious history. In the first phase fascism changed from being a movement with a clearly atheist ideology and practice into a Catholic-friendly regime, a shift symbolically illustrated by the reinstatement of the crucifix in public places and state school classrooms. The Catholic Church reacted to the transition by deciding not to oppose the end of democracy, but to acquiesce in the advent of the totalitarian regime. In the second phase, the fascist government promoted the *Conciliazione* with the Catholic Church, sealed by the signing of the Lateran Pacts with the Holy See. In the third phase, the alliance between fascists and Catholics deteriorated before it finally broke down, resulting in the Catholic Church partially supporting resistance to the fascist and Nazi oppression, and ultimately contributing to the transition towards renewed democracy.

Celebrating the alliance between fascist Italy and the Holy See, and the resulting *Conciliazione*, the Lateran Pacts were signed on 11 February 1929. The Pacts comprised the Lateran concordat regulating 'the conditions of religion and the Church in Italy', the Lateran treaty settling the *questione romana* once and for all and still in force today, and a financial agreement. For the first time, the Holy See recognized the Italian state as the legitimate ruler of the entire territory of Italy. In return, Italy accepted that the small territory of the Vatican within the city of Rome was to become the Vatican City (Città del Vaticano), an independent enclave under the rule of the pope. Since the conquest of Rome, under the *Legge delle Guarentigie*, the Vatican had been, de facto, under the rule of the pope, but had remained, de jure, under the full sovereignty of Italy. The preamble to the Lateran treaty proclaimed that the Vatican City was indispensable to 'the absolute and visible independence of the Holy See' and its 'indisputable sovereignty even in the international realm'.<sup>2</sup>

The Lateran Pacts also strengthened the principle proclaimed by the *Statuto Albertino* that Italy was a Catholic state. Article 1 of the Lateran treaty proclaimed that 'Italy recognizes and reaffirms the principle established in the first Article of the Italian Constitution dated 4 March 1848, according to which the Catholic Apostolic Roman religion is the only State religion.' The treaty also restored the state as the secular arm of the Church in the execution of decisions made by the ecclesiastical courts (articles 22 and 23). The Lateran concordat embodied the new emphasis on Italy as a truly Catholic state, with the bishops bound by an oath of allegiance to the fascist regime (article 20). Compulsory classes in Catholic doctrine were also introduced in secondary schools, since the two parties considered 'the teaching of Christian doctrine according to the form received by Catholic tradition [to be] the foundation and the accomplishment of public education' (article 36). *Matrimonio concordatario*, a Catholic marriage according to Canon law with civil effects, was also introduced, with the state assuming the obligation to recognize the nullity of such marriages if decreed by ecclesiastical courts (article 34).

The new legal framework was completed on 24 June 1929, with a further act permitting the existence of non-Catholic denominations, provided that they did 'not profess principles' or 'follow rites contrary to public policy or morals'.<sup>3</sup> Although in principle making room for the accommodation of non-Catholic denominations, the Act on Permitted Cults (*Legge sui culti ammessi*) of 1929 provided the police and the administration with powers that were used to restrict, and sometimes to harass, non-Catholics, on the assumption that they represented alien and foreign religions, thus threatening the national interest. The control of religious minorities was further enhanced the following year, with the adoption of norms regulating the status of Jewish communities. Anti-Semitic persecution was incorporated in the anti-Jewish legislation from 1938 to 1943 (the so-called *leggi razziali*). Confronted with the spiral of hatred leading to deportations to concentration camps and to the Holocaust, Catholics split, with many doing their best to protect Jewish people, but with others complicit in the persecution through omission or connivance (Zuccotti, 2002).

Despite the strategic interest, coupled with a certain amount of ideological affinity, the alliance between fascists and Catholics remained superficial in character. Following the Lateran treaty, whilst Pius XI (1922–39) celebrated Mussolini as 'the man that the Providence sent to us', the pope also endeavoured to recall what the Catholic faith was really about, thus implicitly opposing the exploitation of Catholicism in the making of fascist ideology and politics. In addition, the pope systematically condemned fascist violence against local Catholic representatives and institutions. The Second Italo-Ethiopian War (1935–7) was a further moment of tension between the state and the Church, as Pius XI expressed his opposition to the 'just war theory' and tried to prevent Mussolini's plans for aggression, but without success (Ceci, 2010).

Fascists collaborated with the Church and the pope, and actively developed the rhetoric of Catholic Italy. The fascist regime, however, remained independent in its ideology and politics. Fascism was construed as a secular, civil religion (Gentile, 1996), and ↪ most fascists had no spiritual interest in the Christian faith. When the fascist regime collapsed, the Catholic Church placed itself on the side of the winners. After all, many Catholics had joined the struggle against fascism, and Italians were aware that parishes, convents, and the Vatican City itself had sheltered many of those persecuted by the 'nazi-fascisti' (Jemolo, 1948).

## From the Republican constitution to the end of the Catholic state: the coming of *laicità*

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After the collapse of fascism, the ensuing civil war from 1943 to 1945, and the liberation in 1945, Italians voted in 1946 to terminate the monarchy and institute a republic. A republican constitution was enacted in 1948. The following forty years marked a deep transformation in Italian society, politics, and the law. Eventually in 1984, in a new concordat between Italy and the Holy See, Italy was no longer recognized as a Catholic state. Instead, in 1989, the Constitutional Court defined *laicità* as being a supreme constitutional principle.

The constitution of 1948 was based on democracy, equality, pluralism, and fundamental rights. Article 3 prescribed equality on grounds of religion. Article 8 decreed that all religious denominations had to be granted the same measure of freedom ('All religious denominations are equally free before the law') and that non-Catholic denominations could stipulate agreements (*intesa*) with the State. Article 19 proclaimed religious freedom in the broadest terms: 'Everyone shall be entitled to profess freely their religious beliefs in any form, individually or with others, and to promote such beliefs and celebrate rites in public or in private, provided they are not offensive to public morality.' Departing from the *Statuto Albertino*, state Catholicism was no longer mentioned and article 7 defined the Italian state and the Catholic Church as two 'independent and sovereign' entities, the relationship of which was regulated by the Lateran Pacts and their future modifications.<sup>4</sup>

p. 674 In the context of the Cold War, with Italy in a strategic geopolitical position between the West and the communist East, Democrazia Cristiana, the majority party from 1948 to 1994, opposed any attempt to withdraw the privileges granted by the concordat of 1929 from the Catholic Church. The social and political secularization of the 1960s and the 1970s, and the fact that Italian Catholics were more inclined to support liberal reforms after the Second Vatican Council, changed this picture. Divorce and abortion were legalized, first by the parliament and then by Italian voters themselves, ↵ when Catholic conservatives with the support of bishops called for a referendum to abrogate the newly introduced legislation. As the country increasingly embraced consumerism and social liberation, the law changed accordingly, with the enactment of new family laws enforcing gender equality, and more liberal criminal and labour legislation. Both bottom-up social dynamics and top-down legal developments led to the creation of a more socially and legally secular country. This coincided with an increasingly diverse Catholic Church, exemplified at the time of the Second Vatican Council in the flourishing of Italian movements such as Communion and Liberation (*Comunione e liberazione*), the Focolare movement (*Movimento dei Focolari*), the charismatic Renewal of the Spirit (*Rinnovamento nello Spirito*), and Sant'Egidio.

Decisions by the Constitutional Court attacking the concordat, an increasingly secular public opinion, a more liberal Christian democratic party, and the governments led by Giovanni Spadolini and Bettino Craxi, the first non-Catholic Prime Ministers in the history of the Republic, obliged the Italian bishops and the Holy See to accept change. The new concordat, the so-called Accordo di Villa Madama, was signed on 18 February 1984. In this the parties agreed that 'the principle of the Catholic religion as the sole religion of the Italian State, originally referred to by the Lateran Pacts, shall be considered no longer in force'. Accordingly, lessons on Catholicism in state schools were no longer compulsory and bishops were no longer required to swear an oath of allegiance to the state. The state funding of the Catholic Church was also reformed and mostly delegated to the taxpayers, who could give 0.8 per cent of their income tax to the Church (the option was later extended to eleven other faith communities).

With Italy no longer a Catholic state, the remnants of the former arrangements were progressively dismantled, such as the requirement to swear an oath before giving evidence in court, or the pro-Catholic blasphemy law. The status of non-Catholic denominations was also improved, with several agreements (*intesa*) being signed between the Government and Protestant (in chronological order, Waldensians and Methodists, Adventists, Assemblies of God, Lutherans, and Baptists) and Jewish communities between 1984 and 1993.

Based on the Second Vatican Council's reference to 'sound cooperation' between the Catholic Church and the 'political community' (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 76), 'mutual collaboration' between the state and the Catholic Church was established as a key principle in article 1 of the 1984 concordat, and following the *intesa* with the Waldensians and the Methodists, the principle was extended to all denominations. Thus, cooperation between the state and the faith communities, together with the constitutional preference for bilateral relationships between the state and religious denominations, became a central aspect of *laicità* and religious freedom in Italy.

p. 675 In 1989 in an historical decision, the Constitutional Court recognized *laicità* as a supreme principle of the constitution, to be inferred from the principles of equality, non-discrimination on grounds of religion, and the independence of the state from the Catholic Church. According to the Court, the principle of *laicità* has to be considered as 'one of the aspects of the form of State outlined by the Constitution'. Such a principle is 'not synonymous with indifference towards the experience of religion', but represents ↪ 'the State's guarantee that religious freedom will be safeguarded, in a framework of denominational and cultural pluralism'. The Court consolidated the principle in the following decade (Ventura, 2012).

## Multicultural and multi-religious Italy

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The principle of the political unity of Catholics, and the closely related majority rule of Democrazia Cristiana (uninterrupted since 1948) did not survive the end of the Cold War. From 1994 onwards, Catholic voters found themselves swinging between different parties and coalitions, and in particular between a centre-right and a centre-left coalition. In turn, parties and coalitions would compete for Catholic support, and the blessing of bishops. The new era also coincided with non-Italian popes, a trend initiated in 1978 with the election of the Polish Karol Wojtyła, and consolidated with the German Joseph Ratzinger (2005) and the Argentinean Jorge Bergoglio (2013). That said, a series of non-Italian popes and a markedly more international Roman Curia did not prevent the problematic mixing of Italian and Vatican politics. The scandals of the early 1980s, culminating in the Banco Ambrosiano case and the kidnapping of Emanuela Orlandi, haunted Italo-Vatican relations, as did new scandals concerning the management of Vatican assets, such as the Gotti Tedeschi case, and the reporting on sex abuse and intra-Vatican power struggles, as exemplified in the trial in the Vatican City of Italian journalists Fittipaldi and Nuzzi (Ventura, 2014).

After 1989, globalization, the crisis in the economy, tensions in the European Union and the Mediterranean region, and growing migration reshaped the role and place of religion in society and politics. The accommodation of diversity under the pluralistic *laicità*, consecrated between 1984 and 1989, and consolidated in the 1990s, remained paramount among the intellectual elite, liberal Catholics, and centre-left opinion. Conversely the centre-right governments and the Catholic bishops backed by the Holy See, held that the identity of Italy was Christian (i.e. Catholic), and that Italian *laicità* had to be interpreted in the sense of giving Catholicism a special place in the law as well as in the country. This defence of Christian Italy was a national narrative, but it was also the banner of regional parties, the Northern League (*Lega Nord*) being an egregious example. Global tensions strengthened identity politics and the mobilization of traditions. The debates surrounding the Lautsi case offer a good example: in this case, the successful defence in the European Court of Human Rights (in 2011) of the mandatory display of the crucifix in state school classrooms marked a tacit departure from the *laicità*-based politics of the 1990s, and the related judicial activism aimed at dismantling Catholic privilege (Ventura, 2014).

p. 676 While having one of the lowest birth rates in the EU, and hitting an all-time low in 2017, Italy saw a steady growth in numbers of immigrants. The quota of non-Italian national ↴ residents approached 10 per cent, that is, about 6 million, in 2017. Indeed following 1989 the religious landscape of the country has changed considerably (see Table 38.1). The national government-run census does not include a question on the religious affiliation of residents and citizens. Such a question would be resented as a constitutional violation of individual rights. Figures are provided, however, by private research institutes such as Cesnur and Confronti-IDOS.

The large number of former or non-practising Catholics—the latter being estimated by the Pew Research Center as 40 per cent of the 80 per cent of Italians who self-identify with the Catholic Church (Pew Research Center, 2018)—render these data volatile, but estimating the unaffiliated at 15 to 20 per cent, Catholics make up about 75 per cent of the Italian population, with considerable differences in religious practice between the north, the centre, and the ‘more religious’ south (Marzano, 2012). About 2 per cent of the Catholic community (around 1 million) are immigrants, mainly from Albania, Ecuador, the Philippines, Poland, Peru, and Romania. Muslims approach 2 million, about 3.5 per cent of the population as a whole, a percentage expected to more than double by 2050. Italian Muslims come mainly from Albania, Morocco, and Tunisia, but also from Pakistan and Bangladesh. Orthodox Christians number about 1.7 million. The larger Orthodox communities are from Romania and Ukraine, but the Coptic Orthodox from Ethiopia and Eritrea are also significant. The opening of the new building of the Church of Scientology in Milan in 2015, and of the Temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in Rome in 2019, heralded a new era in the presence of non-Catholic ↴ churches, as did the proliferation of ethnic churches, mainly Pentecostals, challenging the majority position of the historical Protestant churches. With about half a million members, Jehovah’s Witnesses are the second biggest individual religious denomination after the Catholic Church. The various Buddhist communities add up to c.300,000.

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**Table 38.1** The religious membership of the Italian population, 1994–2017. (Responses to the question: ‘To which religion do you belong?’ (%))

	1994	2007	2017	2017
Roman Catholicism	88.6	86.1	76	
Other religions	2.6	4.8	8.0	
Protestantism				0.9
Christian-Orthodoxy				2.6
Judaism				0.1
Islam				3.0
Buddhism				0.3
Hinduism				0.2
Jehovah’s Witnesses				0.5
Others				0.4

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No religion	8.8	9.1	16
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Source: The data are drawn from Garelli, 1995: 19–67, 2011b, and 2020: 48–9. Reproduced with author’s permission.

Agreements have been signed with a large number of denominations. In addition to those established between 1984 and 1993 (see above), further *intesa* were signed in 2007 with the Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, the Apostolic Church in Italy, the Italian Buddhist Union, and the Italian Hindu Union, in 2015 with Sōka Gakkai, and in 2019 with the Church of England in Italy. While all these agreements have been enacted by parliament or, in the case of the Church of England, are expected to be enacted without any opposition, the agreements signed in 2000 and 2007 with the Jehovah's Witnesses have never been scheduled for discussion in parliament.

Attempts to improve the status of large denominations, such as Orthodox churches from Romania and Ukraine and Islamic communities, were unsuccessful. On the one hand, the parliament proved unable to enact legislation replacing the obsolete *Legge sui culti ammessi* of 1929; and on the other, governments were not ready to negotiate *intesa* with them. The Union of Atheists, Agnostics, and Humanists challenged the political discretion of the government in selecting denominational partners for these agreements, only to be answered in 2016 by the Constitutional Court that the widest governmental discretion in handling *intesa* is indeed constitutional, and inherent in the political nature of those stipulations.

Islam has emerged as the most problematic community in terms of policy making and legal measures. Both international and internal tensions prompted public opinion, the media, governments, and political actors to oppose the granting to individual Muslims and Islamic communities the same freedoms and accommodation granted to other denominations. Overall, Islam has been regarded as an exceptional religion needing exceptional measures with little if any concern for the constitutional coherence of government policies. Following a pattern largely adopted in the rest of Western Europe, the most visible attack on the organizational freedom of Muslims can be found in the initiatives of the government (in Italy, the Ministry of the Interior) devoted to the representation of Italian Muslims and/or to the definition of state policies on Islam (Ventura, 2013). In 2005, a Council for Italian Islam (*Consulta per l'Islam italiano*) was created, with members chosen by the Minister to ensure a broad representation of Muslim communities in Italy. The Council was led by a scientific committee and served until 2008. In 2010, the Committee for Italian Islam (*Comitato per l'Islam italiano*) was created, with a mixed membership of nineteen experts and journalists. The Committee was not meant to represent Italian Muslims, but to advise the Minister on issues of mosques, the education of imams, marriage, and the banning of the headscarf and the burqa. It was terminated in 2012. In 2015 the Council for Relations with Italian Islam (*Consiglio per le relazioni con l'Islam italiano*) was created. Before the tacit termination of the Council in 2017, the National Pact for an Italian Islam (*Patto nazionale per un Islam italiano*) was signed with various Islamic organizations, signalling the intention of the government and the signatories to build an 'open and integrating Islamic community, adhering to the values and principles of the Italian legal system'.

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The regions of Lombardy and Veneto both adopted regional legislation making the building of non-Catholic worship places virtually impossible. Although the legislation was neutrally framed, so as to apply to all non-Catholic faith communities, Muslims were the obvious target of these anti-mosque measures. In 2016 the Constitutional court found the regional legislation partially unconstitutional, but ultimately legitimized the principle that the opening of non-Catholic worship places could be subject to less than friendly regulations. In contrast, the French-style banning of the headscarf in state schools was not even discussed and the banning of the face-veil, although raised in parliament, was only enacted in the Lombardy region.



With cultural Christianity being the reference point of political actors and governments, identity politics provoked an emphasis on Italian values. A Charter of Values was adopted by the Ministry of the Interior in 2007. Ruling in 2017 that the carrying of the Sikh kirpan is a crime, just like the unauthorized carrying of any weapon, the Court of Cassation explained that ‘migrants have the duty to conform to Western values’ (Court of Cassation, 15 May 2017, n. 24084). Similarly, family policies and law, as well as bio-legal issues, continue to be contentious as they had been in the 1970s, at the time of the debate on divorce and abortion. The ‘Family Day’ movement started in 2007, when draft laws on same-sex civil partnerships and end-of-life medical directives were successfully opposed. After the legalization of same-sex civil partnerships in 2016 and end-of-life directives in 2017, the Family Day movement grew both in its internal political influence and its international reach, as witnessed by the government-supported international gathering in Verona of the World Congress of Families in 2019.

## Conclusion

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As the outcome of a rich and complex history, and more recent and radical change, the religious landscape of contemporary Italy features three main dimensions.

First, the Catholic Church remains a key presence, but is not as influential as it used to be either in the everyday life of Italians, or in Italian political life. Still, the widespread identification with the Christian tradition, the resilient practice of many across the country, the immigrant communities of Catholics from the Global South, and the social impact of Catholic institutions and organizations mean that the Church constitutes a powerful reference point. Second, Italy has become a truly multireligious country, with many different faiths present, some of them in considerable numbers. Third, Italian society has also become deeply secular, with large numbers of people who do not affiliate with any denomination, and with a growing number of atheists and unaffiliated both in general, and especially among the young (Garelli, 2016, 2020). These changes require new and complex forms of compromise between the secular and the religious (Garelli, 2011a).

p. 679 Faced with this new landscape, Italians struggle to keep alive the best of their history, in particular a liberal-democratic, non-nationalistic Catholicism, alongside an inclusive and pluralistic *laicità*, while at the same time encouraging peaceful coexistence among the many different cultures and faiths currently present in Italy.

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## Notes

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- 1 All translations from Italian are by Marco Ventura unless otherwise indicated.
- 2 The text of the Lateran Pacts is taken from the English translation at [http://www.vaticanstate.va/EN/State\\_and\\_Government/Judicialgoverningbodies/Laws\\_and\\_decrees.htm](http://www.vaticanstate.va/EN/State_and_Government/Judicialgoverningbodies/Laws_and_decrees.htm).
- 3 Quotations from the act are taken from the English translation at <http://www.religlaw.org/document.php?DocumentID=82>.
- 4 Constitution of the Italian Republic. 1948. Roma: Senato della Repubblica, English version available at [http://www.senato.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg18/file/repository/relazioni/libreria/novita/XVII/COST\\_INGLESE.pdf](http://www.senato.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg18/file/repository/relazioni/libreria/novita/XVII/COST_INGLESE.pdf).

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CHAPTER

## 39 The Low Countries

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### Abstract

Notwithstanding certain similarities, Belgium and the Netherlands have different national histories. Keeping this in mind, this chapter is divided into four sections: early history, pillarization, secularization, and Islam and new developments. From its foundation in 1830, Belgium has been predominantly Catholic, whereas the Netherlands claimed to be a Protestant nation, despite a large minority of Catholics. In the late nineteenth century, self-contained worlds ('pillars') emerged in both countries. Catholics, and in the Netherlands orthodox Protestants as well, used their many-branched pillars of societal organizations to emancipate and mobilize their constituencies. In the 1960s, the pillars started to crumble and the number of non-affiliated rose to 42 per cent in Belgium, and 68 per cent in the Netherlands. Notwithstanding the immigration of significant groups of Christians and Muslims and a flourishing market in spirituality, both countries have become very secularized. A final note summarizes the situation in Luxembourg.

**Keywords:** [the Netherlands](#), [Belgium](#), [Luxembourg](#), [Christianity](#), [Catholicism](#), [pillarization](#), [secularization](#), [Islam](#), [non-affiliation](#)

**Subject:** [History of Religion](#), [Religion](#)

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THE Low Countries consist of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. They are also known as the Benelux countries, from the initial letters of their names. Within the Benelux Union they cooperate and pursue a common foreign trade policy. Together with France, Germany, and Italy, the Low Countries were in 1958 the six founding members of European Economic Community—the predecessor of the European Union. Although the three countries are all constitutional, parliamentary monarchies, they have rather different national histories. They also differ from each other both culturally and religiously. The Netherlands (17 million inhabitants) and Belgium (11.5 million inhabitants) will be discussed alternately; a separate section is devoted to Luxembourg (600,000 inhabitants) at the end of the chapter.

The Netherlands is probably best known for its struggle against the water, its commercial and moral spirit (the merchant and the divine going hand in hand), and for its religious pluralism and tolerance. Famously, the Dutch Republic was a tolerant haven in an intolerant confessional Europe. In the 1980s Amsterdam

became the ‘Gay Capital of the World’. But after the murders of the politician Pim Fortuyn and the film-maker Theo van Gogh (a distant relative of the famous painter) in 2002 and 2004 respectively, things appear to have changed. Anti-immigrant sentiments have grown in the last twenty years and Muslims are often seen as a threat to Dutch identity. Not only extreme right-wing parties, but also liberal and Christian democratic politicians exploit these sentiments.

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Belgium became an independent nation in 1830. The population was largely Catholic and the Catholic Church controlled education and poor relief. The dominant bourgeoisie spoke French, whereas in Flanders ordinary people spoke Flemish. In the 1960s the country was divided into three regions: Dutch-speaking Flanders in the northern part of the nation, French-speaking Wallonia in the south, and the region of Brussels in the centre which is officially bilingual. In the capital with its many European institutions, however, French is the dominant language. German is spoken by only 1 per cent in the east of the country. The language frontier between Flanders and Wallonia has deeply divided the country and has had a greater impact than the shared Catholic heritage. The Catholic Church still has a strong position, but the percentage of non-church members has increased rapidly in recent decades.

This chapter is divided into four sections: early history, pillarization, secularization, and Islam and new religious developments. In addition to providing essential information and statistics, the chapter will consider different interpretations of these developments. A final note looks at the situation in Luxembourg.

## Early history

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The Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 was probably the last major occasion at which public reference was made to the *Res publica Christiana*, the ‘Christian Commonwealth’. This understanding was gradually replaced by the notion of Europe (Davies, 1996). In the early Enlightenment it was no longer acceptable to refer to the community of European nations by their common Christian heritage. ‘Religion’, at this point, became the concept that was used to capture the basic tenets of confessionalized Christianity in a functionally differentiated society. Gradually the term evolved into a broader concept referring to other religions as well. The realm of religion was—at least to some extent—separated from that of politics, economy, and science (Kaufmann, 1997: 93–4). The American and French revolutions led to the formal separation of state and church. This principle was introduced in the Netherlands in 1795 and granted even to minority groups, such as Jewish citizens (Schöffers, 1981), some basic rights and a comparatively large degree of freedom.

The revolt of the Netherlands against Spanish rule in the late sixteenth century led to the division of the northern and southern provinces of the Netherlands (roughly the present-day Kingdom of the Netherlands and present-day Belgium and Luxembourg). Since 1585—when the city of Antwerp was reconquered by the governor of the Habsburg Netherlands—a harsh policy of catholicization was pursued and as a consequence some 150,000 Protestants emigrated to the north. Through the alliance of the absolutist state and the Catholic Church the southern Netherlands became a homogeneous Catholic country (Hellemans, 2011).

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In 1581 the northern part of the Netherlands established themselves de facto as an independent federation of sovereign provinces. The Dutch Republic (1581–1795), however, was not a monoconfessional state. The Reformed Church was the public church of the nation, but other denominations, such as the Catholics, were tolerated. The new elites were convinced that people should not be persecuted because of their religious convictions. The origin of the Dutch Republic in a revolt against the absolutist and centralizing policies of the Habsburg Netherlands resulted in a new status quo characterized by local and regional differences. In the region behind the front line of the Dutch revolt, stretching roughly from the south-west to the north-east (Knippenberg, 2005: 97), Catholic initiatives were suppressed, but in areas to the north-west of this strip different religious groups and even non-participation were tolerated.

According to a rough estimate only 50 per cent of the population of Haarlem belonged to a church in 1620 (Spaans, 1989). This does not mean, of course, that the other half were atheists or considered themselves not to be Christian. But, whatever the case, the more individual and spiritual ways of belonging to the Christian tradition gradually disappeared during the seventeenth century and at the end of the eighteenth virtually everyone belonged to a church. A respectable citizen had to be a church member. Moreover, the local authorities structured poor relief according to church membership. Thus, administrative measures contributed to a higher degree of participation (van Rooden, 1996, 1997).

The French invasion in 1795 brought an end to the *ancien régime*. The Netherlands became a vassal state of France with a strong centralized administration. After the final defeat of Napoleon, the Congress of Vienna (1814–15) determined that the Catholic Austrian Netherlands (present-day Belgium) should be united with the former Dutch Republic. The new Kingdom of the Netherlands existed in this form from 1815 until 1830, when the southern Netherlands revolted successfully against William I.

On 4 October 1830 a provisional Belgian government proclaimed independence, which was accepted by the Dutch in 1839. Belgium had an overwhelmingly Catholic population (99.8 per cent according to the Census of 1846) and the power of the Catholic Church was challenged in the late nineteenth century only by radical liberals and socialists. When in 1879 a *laïcist* (secular) school system was introduced, the Church founded its own private schools, criticizing the parents of children attending ‘schools without God’ (Dobbelaere and Voyé, 1990: 2). Between 1882 and 1914, moreover, Belgian governments were homogeneously Catholic. The polarization between Catholics and so-called ‘anticlericals’, present in Belgium, is characteristic of countries with a dominant religion that tries to establish a monopoly. Spain, Italy, and of course France (‘Les deux Frances’) are good examples of this phenomenon (Hellemans, 2011).

The (northern) Netherlands, conversely, were religiously mixed, but considered themselves to be a Protestant nation. The remaining Catholics—mainly living in the southern provinces of the country—still comprised some 35–37 per cent of the population in the nineteenth century (Knippenberg, 1992: 169), but were seen as an alien element of Dutch society because of their orientation towards Rome. The former public Reformed Church and the old dissenters, such as the Mennonites, Armenians, and Lutherans, formed a new establishment. The state bureaucracy reorganized the churches and even regulated the payment of the ministers (Kennedy and Zwemer, 2010: 244–6). The Protestant clergy were trained at the universities in their mission to teach and civilize the common people. The dissemination of national sentiment was seen as part of the Christian message. Conversely, Dutch national identity was ‘furnished with religious characteristics, such as a simple piety, strong moral sentiments, and the validation of common sense and tolerance’ (van Rooden, 1997: 142).

p. 684 This view of the union of religion and the nation was challenged by small groups of mostly lower-class people who left the main ‘Dutch Reformed Church’ to establish orthodox Calvinist churches—mainly in the periphery of the country in the northern provinces and the south-west (the southern provinces were overwhelmingly Catholic). Notwithstanding imprisonment by the state, their number rose from 2 per cent in 1859 to 4.2 per cent in 1889 (Knippenberg, 1992: 70). An important landmark was the liberal constitution of 1848. Whereas in France and Prussia in 1848 revolutions broke out, in the Netherlands the new order was the result of an ongoing process of reform (although the King was alarmed by the events abroad and gave in rather easily). Church and state were separated bit by bit and in 1853 the Roman Catholic Church was able to reintroduce the episcopal hierarchy.

The hegemony of the Protestant establishment started to crumble in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Astonishingly this was largely the work of one man who succeeded in reshaping the Dutch religious landscape: Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920). Trained at the liberal Theological Faculty of Leiden—famous at the time for its historical-critical analysis of the Bible and its dismissal of miracles—he became the most influential Dutch politician and theologian of the modern era. He took over orthodox organizations and did

something that was almost unimaginable at the time: he forced a split in the Dutch Reformed Church and founded in 1888 the 'Reformed Churches in the Netherlands'. Only 7.6 per cent of the Dutch Reformed went with Kuyper (Knippenberg, 1992: 95), but his impact was much bigger.

Kuyper was not only a church man, but also a politician, an orator, and a prolific journalist. He founded his own newspaper, his own neo-calvinist Free University in Amsterdam, and the first, modern political party in the Netherlands: the Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP), which was established in 1879. He was Member of Parliament for ten years and prime minister from 1901 to 1905. His polarizing style was entirely new in Dutch politics and was an affront to the old elites who still clung to the ideals of a consensual and homogeneous state and an inclusive, Protestant people's church (Molendijk, 2008). The segmented social structures—based on differences of religion and worldview—of the so-called pillarized Dutch society were to a large extent determined by Kuyper. Later, Catholics and socialists followed suit.

Kuyper mobilized a constituency that defined itself as a special group in Dutch politics and society as against other groups. This brought an end to the old order that was based on the identification of the nation with a general form of Protestantism, which Kuyper dismissed as lukewarm and even anti-Christian. Politically Kuyper forged a coalition with the Roman Catholics against the liberals. This alliance would form the backbone of most cabinets during the twentieth century and gave the Catholics a clearly visible place in politics and society at large. In the segmented social structures of 'pillarization' the decision of the former public church to identify itself with the nation and the 'general interest' was self-destructive and led to big losses. Between 1880 and 1970 its membership shrank by some 50 per cent, whereas the various more orthodox Protestant groups as well as the Catholics almost succeeded—partly due to their significantly higher birth rates—in maintaining their proportion of the fast-growing Dutch population.

## Pillarization

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'Pillarization' is a technical term to denote the politico-denominational segregation of a society. The term (*verzuiling*) was coined in the Netherlands (Molendijk, 2007) and many scholars have argued that Dutch (and to a lesser extent Belgian) society was a prime example of this type of segmentation or segregation. Foreign observers (among them Francis Fukuyama) have been critical of this system of deep societal cleavages which they claimed was detrimental to the integration of different groups in the nation. Conversely, the Dutch political scientist Arend Lijphart began his research by reversing the question: that is, by asking how this system *was able to work* (Lijphart, 1968) The primary answer was that *consociationalism* (as he translated the term *verzuiling*) functioned well, because of the close cooperation between the elites of the various pillars. Nowadays the whole idea of pillarization and the alleged Dutch *Sonderweg* is very much contested, in so far as it suggests deep structures of segregation, which upon closer inspection did not really exist.

Although the term 'heavy communities' (van Dam, 2011) may be more appropriate, it is doubtful whether it will displace the old term 'pillars' any time soon. There are almost as many definitions of pillarization as there are scholars who deal with this complex phenomenon. One of the early and most influential of these was the Dutch sociologist J. P. Kruijt who discerned three circles which—taken together—were characteristic of pillarization (Kruijt, 1957: 17–18). First, there has to exist a plurality of churches (denominationalism); second, there have to be institutions with educational and charitable remits, such as schools and hospitals; and third, Kruijt discerned the many types of organization and institution that develop societal activities (on a religious basis), such as unions, sporting clubs, libraries, political parties, radio and television networks, farmers' associations, and musical societies.

This third circle is crucial according to Kruijt, who argued that the level of participation in these organizations was much higher in the Netherlands than in countries such as Britain, Austria, and



Switzerland. Only Belgium is somewhat similar to the Netherlands, where there are ‘two mighty blocks of organizations, the socialist and the Catholic’ (Kruijt, 1957: 17). In the Netherlands it is estimated that in 1956 about 90 per cent of Catholics and orthodox Protestants participated along pillarized lines in primary schools, unions, broadcasting corporations, and political choice (Molendijk, 2007: 266). If the degree of participation had been 100 per cent, the only chance to meet members of other pillars would have been at work, in the army, while shopping (insofar it was not pillarized), and on the street (Kruijt, 1957: 18).

p. 686 What is remarkable about the Dutch case is the deep split in reformed Protestantism and the significant role of various Protestant political parties. New social and religious movements emerged in other countries as well, becoming politically influential and creating their own institutions and organizations. Similarly, socialists and ultramontane Catholics were important elsewhere in Europe, but Kuyper’s Neo-Calvinists seem peculiar to the Netherlands. What all three movements have in common is that they were popular, engaged large numbers of people, and used modern mass media such as daily newspapers, the radio, and mass rallies. They all invoked ritual behaviour (Kuyper even introduced a special pronunciation of the name of God) and presented a distinct ideology that defined them clearly against their antagonists.

The period between 1917 and 1968 is seen as the high point of pillarization. The ‘Pacification’ (a political agreement between liberals and socialists on the left and Christian democrats on the right) of 1917 brought not only universal suffrage for men (which laid the foundation for the introduction of women’s vote in 1919), but also equal rights for confessional schools, which were to be paid for out of public funds. Up to today ‘special education’ (as the term runs) is financed completely by the state. That means, for instance, that Montessori and Islamic schools are also funded by tax payers’ money, provided that they satisfy government standards of quality. It is true both that mobilization and organization along confessional lines started well before 1917 (it was beginning as far back as the 1870s) and that did it not end once and for all in 1968. That date is chosen, however, to indicate the rise of protest movements which were critical of various forms of authority and have gradually contributed to the demise of a pillarized society. But even now a substantial majority (some 70 per cent) of the Dutch children go to ‘special’ (Christian, Jewish, Muslim, or humanist) schools. The reason for most parents is not that their children are to be educated in a secluded environment, but that the school is nearby or has a good reputation.

The term pillarization implies pluralism. The following definition expresses the Dutch situation very clearly:

A pillar is ... defined as a subsystem in society that links political power, social organization and individual behaviour and which is aimed to promote—in competition as well as in cooperation with other social and political groups—goals inspired by a common ideology shared by its members for whom the pillar and its ideology is the main locus of social identification.

(Bax, 1990: 104)

But how do the several pillars relate to each other? Does not the metaphor of pillarization suggest a false symmetry and uniformity? It has been a matter of debate, moreover, whether the social democrats and the liberals can be aptly described as ‘pillars’ (Kennedy and Zwemer, 2010: 255–6).

p. 687 The degree of organization and participation differs to a considerable extent. The liberals were basically against segmentation, as they wanted to represent all citizens. Reluctantly they created their own organizations, which formed a relatively weak pillar, which is sometimes called the liberal milieu. The socialists were much more strongly organized than the liberals and were part of an international movement. The Catholics and the orthodox Protestants had the strongest networks of organizations, which shaped the identities of their members forcefully. Their lives were lived within the pillar. The Catholics were members of one church and one political party, whereas the orthodox Protestants were divided among themselves into various bigger and smaller pillars. Within orthodox Protestantism there have been countless

theological debates, divisions, and separations, as well as some mergers, which make the religious landscape in the Netherlands complex and hard to fathom. The many theological struggles that have energized Dutch believers may be considered in retrospect as a factor that contributed to the alignment within the pillar, as the laity was involved in these controversies.

Given the complexity of Dutch pillarization it is difficult to say what was precisely at stake in these processes. Scholars have pointed to the motives and elements that have played a role. Important in this respect is the emancipation of underprivileged groups, either in a religious (Catholics and orthodox Protestants) or a social (workers) respect. It could also be a combination of both, as was the case with Kuyper's *kleine luyden* (simple folks), lower middle-class orthodox Protestants. Second, the defence against secularizing tendencies—in particular against the 'neutral' state and its monopoly on schools—played a significant role. A third element concerns the wish of the elites to control the lower classes and to soften class differences. Within the pillar you could meet people of different social backgrounds, whereas nowadays the segregation in Dutch society runs along lines of income and education. Fourth, political scholars such as Lijphart were interested in how the elites established political stability in a pluralist society. Negotiating at the top led to peaceful cooperation and political participation such as party membership increased in the process of pillarization.

The concept of pillarization has been successfully applied to other countries as well. Belgium is an obvious example which is both similar to and different from the Netherlands. A study of the Belgian socialist movement concluded that a socialist family lives 'of the Party, within the Party and for the Party' (Hellemans, 1990: 20). As in the case of the Netherlands the 'self-contained worlds' of the pillars extended in Belgium 'into the political sphere (with national political parties) and into the socio-economic realm (with trade unions and a host of professional organizations)' (Hellemans, 2020). During the nineteenth century the Catholic school and education system was considerably expanded, including the re-establishment of the Catholic University in Louvain in 1834. Around 1850 a Catholic political party of dignitaries emerged which would broaden its constituency—including the middle classes, farmers and workers—in the course of the twentieth century. From the 1890s onwards—as the social costs of the process of industrialization became clearly visible—Catholics founded Catholic co-operative societies for sick relief and trade unions. In the twentieth century Belgian Catholic farmers, middle classes, and women were also organized in voluntary associations which promoted their emancipation and well-being. By the 1950s the Catholic pillar included almost all realms of society. Although the liberal and socialist pillars were less comprehensive (they did not have their own schools and only a few hospitals), they had their own unions, mass media, youth movements, as well as a political party (Dobbelaere and Voyé, 1990).

p. 688 A systematic approach to pillarization has been suggested by the Belgian sociologist Staf Hellemans, who discerns three meanings in relation to pillarization. First, is the organizational pillarization of a part of the population; second, there are examples of a complete segmentation of society with more or less closed subcultures; and third, the term may refer to the political pacification of these subcultures within a consociational democracy (Hellemans, 1993: 122). Hellemans singles out the Netherlands, Belgium, and Austria as examples of countries where pillarization has been the dominant form of segmentation and where the political elites of the subcultures cooperate closely and peacefully (Hellemans, 2020).

Furthermore, Hellemans places pillarization in the broader context of emerging social movements in the nineteenth century. These movements try to mobilize people on a national scale for which reason they create organizations, which may lead to pillarized subcultures. Since 1870 large numbers of people in Europe gradually became involved in super-local networks and activities: economically (in workers' associations), politically (in the extension of the right to vote), and culturally (in the development of primary and secondary education). Hellemans explains the prominence of Catholic and socialist pillars by their orientation towards the collective, whereas liberals and Protestants emphasize the autonomy of the individual. Here he points to the distinction between 'pristine' pillars and secondary pillars, which have to

adapt to the new structure to maintain their position. After the 1960s we find no new major examples of pillarization. In the Netherlands some smaller orthodox Protestant groups have tried to build a pillar after the 1960s, but these remained small and are not as extensive as the old pillars. In the 1970s the self-contained worlds of the pillars started to crumble—both in the Netherlands and Belgium.

## Secularization

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Although secularization is a highly contested concept, it is still useful in summarizing significant trends in Dutch religion since the 1960s and 1970s. The decline in institutionalized Christianity from this period onwards can hardly be disputed. In the last forty years of the twentieth century church membership halved (Becker and De Wit, 2000: 24). The speed of this process has, paradoxically, to do with the high degree of engagement in church institutions. Either you were an active member or you were out. There was little space in between to allow for lukewarm participation. A recent survey suggests that the population comprises some 25 per cent church members, 5 per cent Muslims, 2 per cent belonging to other faiths, and almost 68 per cent ‘nones’ or non-church members. The mainline churches will lose even more members in the future, as younger generations are underrepresented in these institutions (Bernts and Berghuis, 2016: 21–3).

p. 689 One can point to the rise of spiritual forms of religiosity or to the fact that many people still entertain, for instance, the idea that there is ‘something’ after death. These are important developments that merit scholarly attention, but this trend implies a fundamental relocation of religion from hierarchical structures associated with pillarization to subjectivized forms of religiosity. It is also true that evangelical and Pentecostal churches attract significant numbers of younger people, but this will not be enough ↴ to compensate for the losses of the old mainline churches. The role of Christian and Muslim immigrants will be discussed in the next section.

Overall, however, the situation remains nuanced. Despite the decline in church membership and church attendance since the 1960s, especially in the countries of north-western Europe, the old continent is not as secularized as one might assume. Three out of four Europeans say they are religious persons and convinced atheists rarely form more than 10 per cent of the population. France, where 15 per cent claims this position, stands out in this respect. In the Netherlands 12 per cent of people still go to church regularly (usually once a week), whereas 23 per cent say they attend a few times a year (Bernts and Berghuis, 2016: 25). In Belgium church membership is substantially higher, whereas only some 8 per cent attend Mass regularly. Catholic baptisms and church weddings are still common practice in Belgium, but over the period between 1967 and 2007 there was a sharp decrease from 93.6 per cent to 54.6 per cent (baptisms) and from 84.3 per cent to 58.4 per cent (church weddings) (Botterman and Hooghe, 2009: 18–20). In Belgium belonging to the Catholic Church is for many people still a way of life, whereas in the Netherlands church membership has effectively become a matter of personal decision.

That said, the late 1960s were a turning point in Belgium as well. Between 1967 and 1973 regular church attendance dropped from about 42 per cent to 32 per cent. In this short period the Catholic Church in Belgium lost ‘a relatively large part of the upper and upper-middle classes’ (Dobbelaere and Voyé, 1990: 3). The self-declared membership of the Catholic Church dropped from 72 per cent in 1981 to 50 per cent in 2009 (Hellemans, 2011). The percentage of people who claim that they do not belong to any denomination went from 24 per cent in 1981 to 42 per cent in 2009 (Dobbelaere, Billiet, and Voyé, 2011: 145). These surveys based on European Values Study 2009 categorize some 2.5 per cent as belonging to ‘other Christian groups’ and 5 per cent as Muslim. Statistics from the Pew Research Center show a higher percentage of Christians (64 per cent), a smaller percentage of non-affiliated (29 per cent), and almost 6 per cent Muslims (Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures, 2010).

For the most part, the decline in church membership is interpreted in terms of secularization. In addition, Karel Dobbelaere and Liliane Voyé point to the phenomenon of *bricolage*: even believing Catholics no longer accept a set menu, but ‘pick and choose’ what they believe and practise (Dobbelaere and Voyé, 1990: 4). Similarly, although links between integration in the pillar and electoral behaviour and ideological attitudes still exist, the process of depillarization is very evident in Belgium. Importantly, Christian organizations have loosened their ties to the Christian Democratic Party very considerably (Hellemans, 2020).

p. 690 The Dutch historian Peter van Rooden has given a convincing account of how the dechristianization of the Netherlands is to be understood. He has pointed to three factors that have contributed to this process (van Rooden, 1998). First, there were internal developments that weakened the significance of being confined within a pillar. Neo-Calvinist and Catholic intellectuals, for example, increasingly began to doubt that it was of ultimate importance to guard the borders of their respective communities. Intellectual developments played a role, but more important was the success of mass ↵ mobilization. Neo-Calvinists and Catholics had gained influence in Dutch society, and succeeded in reaching influential positions. Was there anything else to achieve?

A second factor that van Rooden mentions is probably even more influential. Although mass mobilizations had motivated and engaged people to organize themselves in separate ‘heavy communities’, they also had a very authoritarian character. Catholic clergy as well as Protestant leaders told people what to do. This concerned financial contributions to the churches, but also involved women and families who were pressed to have more children. On 1 May 1954, for example, the Catholic hierarchy issued an official statement that the faithful should vote for the Catholic People’s Party and not become members of socialist organizations (including the Labour Party). Strong boundaries were drawn between clergy and laity, men and women, and between sin and virtue. This whole constellation was undermined by the cultural revolution of the 1960s—an anti-authoritarian movement that rejected a strict sexual morality and traditional gender roles. The Catholics and the orthodox Protestants could not accommodate the new youth culture, in so far as the revolution was directed very precisely against the traditional religious values of these groups.

Besides internal developments and the cultural revolution of the 1960s, fundamental shifts in Dutch society rendered the idea that this society was formed of different and separate groups less plausible. These shifts undermined the possibilities of the pillars to exercise power over their members. For example, Peter van Rooden—together with the sociologist José Casanova—emphasize the transformation that was brought about by the rise of the welfare state. The pillarized organizations were integrated within a national bureaucracy. This entailed a transference of the collective identification ‘of the confessional community ... to the imagined community of the nation-state’ (Casanova, 2009: 220). A further example is instructive. One of the greatest successes of the Dutch pillarized system had been the way in which it had encapsulated the radio in the 1930s by founding Catholic, Protestant, and socialist broadcasting companies. Television, however, was not that easily confined within the old system. Here a truly national culture found its voice.

Peter van Rooden concluded that ‘the new prosperity, growing mobility, and extraordinarily rapid spread of new suburbs blurred the visible distinctions between people’ (van Rooden, 1998: 40–1). Under these circumstances the idea that one belonged either by birth or by choice to a particular group became less convincing. The rise of the modern Dutch welfare state and the cultural revolution of the 1960s with its stress on consumption and personal self-fulfilment did not square with a pillarized society (McLeod, 2007). The system had always asked much of the individual believer who had to spend considerable amounts of time and money within his or her own pillar. This ideal was no longer attractive. The Netherlands gradually transformed into a society of individuals who were supposed to be tolerant and respectful of different ways of life. More recently, however, this idea of the Netherlands as a pluralist and tolerant country has lost much of its plausibility. After the murder in 2004 of the film maker Theo van Gogh by Mohammed Bouyeri, a Dutch-Moroccan Muslim, and the death threats against members of parliament, such as Ayaan Hirsi Ali, p. 691 Geert Wilders, and Thierry ↵ Baudet, the intellectual climate has hardened. Islam seems to have taken over

the old role of the Roman Catholics as a threat to the Dutch nation. Nowadays a strict policy against immigrants is enforced and some politicians are talking as if the Dutch nation will be taken over by Muslims sooner rather than later.

## Islam and new religious developments

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The first report on the presence of Islam in Belgium was prepared by the Turkish consul in 1829 and estimated the number of Muslims at 6,000 at the time. Their visibility was probably rather limited—something that started to change in the mid-1960s, when migrants from Maghreb countries and Turkey were employed in low-wage jobs in the mining, steel, and car industries (Fadil, El Asri, and Bracke, 2015: 224). Later these so-called guest workers were encouraged to bring their spouses and children to Belgium. But with rising unemployment in the wake of the 1973 oil crisis the borders were closed to manual labour immigrants. In 1974, however, Islam was recognized as an official religion in Belgium. The majority of Belgian Muslims (some 5–6 per cent of the Belgian population in 2019) are descendants of these migrant workers.

Their presence has grown significantly in recent decades. Halal shops and mosques have transformed the shape of the big cities, especially the capital Brussels, where Muslims comprise approximately 17–25 per cent of the population (Fadil, El Asri, and Bracke, 2015: 222). This transformation has provoked unease and right-wing parties such as Vlaams Belang (formerly Vlaams Blok) have put the ‘migration question’ at the centre of the political agenda. The attacks of 9/11 in the United States and the 2016 bombings in Brussels that killed thirty-two people encouraged the negative image of Muslims. Nowadays much research is policy-oriented and focuses on immigration and issues of security. In 2011 Belgium was the first European country to ban full-face veils (niqabs and burqas) in public space. In 2018 the Netherlands and Luxembourg followed suit with a ban on face-covering veils in specific public places such as schools, hospitals, public transport, and government buildings.

In the colonial era the Netherlands was sometimes called the biggest Muslim country in the world. The possession of the Netherlands East Indies (present-day Indonesia) with its huge Muslim population was deemed to substantiate this claim. Currently, however, relatively few Muslims in the Netherlands come from former colonies, such as Indonesia, Surinam and the Netherlands Antilles. Most Muslims have a Moroccan or Turkish background. These individuals arrived in the Netherlands from the 1960s onwards to do the ‘dirty work’ and were perceived as ‘guest workers’, who would eventually return to their country of origin. But after the oil crisis of 1973, they were seen as ‘ethnic minorities’, who would settle in the Netherlands and be reunited with their families on Dutch soil. In the late 1990s, however, a further shift took place. As Islam became publicly and clearly visible (veiled women on the streets, mosques and Islamic schools) and terrorist incidents spread fear—Moroccans, Turks, and other immigrants were increasingly termed ‘Muslims’. It is equally clear that such attacks played a significant role in this reframing (Berger, 2015: 202).

Thus, the marked increase in the Dutch Muslim population is due to immigration. Although there are a number of methodological problems in these assessments, it is more or less accurate to say that some 5 per cent of the Dutch population of 17.2 million people (in 2017) are Muslim. Previous overviews came to a higher percentage, largely because they took the percentage of Muslims in the country of origin as point of reference, whereas new research has shown that this leads to an overestimate. For instance, not 98 per cent, but only some 40 per cent of the Iranian refugees in the country claim to be a Muslim (CBS, 2009: 36). From 1996 to 2015 more than 2 million people migrated to the Netherlands. Most of them came from Poland (191,900) and Germany (129,800), but large groups also came from the UK, China, the United States, and the

Soviet Union. The Netherlands Antilles ranks third (92,400), and Turkey and Morocco take the fourth and eighth places, with 92,000 and 67,600 people respectively (van Dyke, 2017).

It is clear that Christian immigrants outnumber Muslim immigrants (54 per cent against 26 per cent); 8 per cent of the immigrants belong to another religious group; and 12 per cent are 'nones' (van Dyke, 2017). It is very hard to get up-to-date and precise data about non-Western Christian immigrants. In 2008 the sociologist Hijme Stoffels calculated the number of Christian immigrants from Latin America, Africa, and Asia at about 500,000 people (Stoffels, 2008: 15–16). The substantial rise of evangelical and Pentecostal churches in the Netherlands is related to this development, but it is even more difficult to get reliable data here. It has been estimated that migrant churches in Amsterdam attract substantially more people than the mainline Dutch Protestants: on an average Sunday some 25,500 against fewer than 2,500 participants (de Hart, 2014: 110–11).

Other religions have relatively small numbers of adherents in the Netherlands. Hinduism and Buddhism are well under 1 per cent, whereas the Jews represent a tiny 0.1 per cent of the Dutch population (during the Second World War 75 per cent of the Jewish population were deported and murdered). Strikingly two-thirds of the Dutch say that they don't belong to a church (Schmeets, 2016: 5), but that does not imply that they are not interested in questions of life and death or meaningful existence. Much depends, however, on how researchers define these groups and which terms are used to describe the growing number of 'spiritual seekers' (to take but one example). The 'spiritual turn' is a major development in late modern Western religious history, but it is hard to establish the exact size and impact of these new groups, which have little social cohesion and are even more subjectivized and individualized than older forms of radical Protestantism.

## A note on Luxembourg

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p. 693 The present-day state of Luxembourg was founded in 1815 by the Congress of Vienna. The Grand Duchy is one of the smallest sovereign states of Europe, but is the seat of <sup>4</sup> the European Court of Justice, the highest judicial authority in the European Union. The official languages are French, German, and Luxembourgish. Like Belgium it was and still is very much a Catholic country. Luxembourg is now a secular state, but until very recently the relationship between the state and religious communities, especially the Roman Catholic Church, has been close. In 2015 a decision was made to sever these ties and to introduce, among other things, a common 'values education' class in public education.

According to recent statistics, some 68.7 per cent of the population are Catholic, and 1.8 per cent Protestant; 2.6 per cent belong to a non-Christian religion, and 24.9 per cent are unaffiliated (Borsenberger and Dicks, 2011: 6–7, 27). The rise in the number of Muslims in the period between 1999 and 2008 from 0.7 per cent to 2 per cent is due to the arrival of immigrants from former Yugoslavia. Foreigners account for almost half of the Luxembourg population. The largest group are the Portuguese, comprising 16.4 per cent of the total population (migration started in the mid-1960s), followed by the French (6.6 per cent), Italians (3.4 per cent), Belgians (3.3 per cent), and Germans (2.3 per cent). Although there is clear evidence of secularization (weekly participation in religious services has dropped to 13 per cent in 2009), the balance between affiliated Christians, nones and practitioners of other religions is predicted to remain stable (70 per cent, 26 per cent, 4 per cent) over the next twenty-five years (Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures, 2010).

## Conclusion

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Luxembourg today (2021) is the most religious—that is Catholic—nation among the Low Countries. The Grand Duchy has a relatively small minority of Muslims (some 2.3 per cent), whereas in Belgium and the Netherlands some 5 per cent of the population claim to be Muslim.

From its foundation in 1830, Belgium has been predominantly Catholic, whereas the Netherlands claimed to be a Protestant nation, notwithstanding a large minority of Catholics who were marginalized from national life. At the end of the nineteenth century self-contained worlds ('pillars') emerged in both countries. Especially the Catholics in Belgium and the Netherlands and the Dutch orthodox Protestants used their many-branched pillars of societal organizations to emancipate and mobilize their respective constituencies. The late 1960s proved to be a turning point. The pillars started to crumble and the number of non-affiliated rose to 68 per cent in the Netherlands, 42 per cent in Belgium, and 27 per cent in Luxembourg.

The old ideal of integrating differences by pillarization is no longer viable in a society faced with new questions. Radical Islam is currently seen in the Netherlands as *the* 'religious group disturbing the unity of a moral nation of civilized and tolerant individual citizens' (van Rooden, 1997: 153). The modern ideal of self-fulfilment has primarily to do with questions of gender and sexual identity, especially the acceptance of homosexuality and female emancipation. Muslims, however, claim that the idea of autonomous self-realization entitles them to their own views and practices (such as wearing a veil). The controversies about Muslims and their place in secular societies centre on key concepts such as self-realization and autonomy. These ideas are crucial to modern—especially Dutch—self-understanding, but what exactly do they mean in a plural society? Thus the discussion is not about the introduction (or not) of the Shari'ah, but about the implementation of these concepts in a situation where the status quo is challenged by new arrivals.

Despite the immigration of large groups of Muslims and Christians on the one hand, and a growing and flourishing market of spirituality on the other, both Belgium and the Netherlands have become very secularized. This trend is likely to continue. In the Netherlands, for example, the number of Christian church members is expected to decrease further, from some 25 per cent of the population in 2015 to 20 per cent in 2030. The dechristianization of the Netherlands, however, does not lead necessarily to a more tolerant society. Many Dutch citizens are dissatisfied with their situation, economically and culturally. It is easy to blame immigrants or Muslims or the European Union for this, whereas global economic forces are likely to be more important for the loss of jobs and income and a sense of alienation. For all these reasons the image of the Netherlands as a tolerant nation that handles religious pluralism with ease and grace no longer corresponds to the realities that the Dutch are facing.



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### CHAPTER

## 40 Nordic Europe

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### Abstract

This chapter examines religious change in the five Nordic countries: Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, and Iceland. Immigration came later to these countries than in many other parts of Europe, but it has transformed Sweden, Norway, and Denmark into relatively diverse societies; Finland and Iceland remain more homogeneous. In spite of these differences, the religious outlook is changing right across the Nordic countries with a decline in membership in the majority churches, falling indices of religious belief and practice in most of them, growing numbers of people who place themselves outside the faith communities, and multiplying forms of spirituality that lie beyond religious institutions altogether. The chapter addresses the implications that these changes have for religion and state relations, and the role of religion in politics, the media, and civil society.

**Keywords:** [Nordic countries](#), [religious beliefs](#), [religious practices](#), [immigration](#), [religious diversity](#), [state](#), [politics](#), [media](#), [civil society](#)

**Subject:** [History of Religion](#), [Religion](#)

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THIS chapter examines ongoing religious changes in the five Nordic countries: Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, and Iceland. These countries are often described as stable, social democratic welfare regimes, characterized by comprehensive risk coverage, universalism, generous benefits, and egalitarianism (Esping-Andersen, 1990). In addition, all of them have majority Evangelical Lutheran churches. Immigration flows came one to two decades later in these countries than in many other parts of Europe, but since the 1970s, profound changes have taken place. This chapter will map how immigration has transformed Sweden, Norway, and Denmark into relatively diverse countries, while Finland and Iceland remain more homogeneous. These differences apart, the religious outlook is changing across the region with declining membership in the majority churches, decreasing religious beliefs and practices in most of these countries, a growing number of people who place themselves outside any faith community, and many forms of spirituality that lie beyond religious institutions altogether. Finally, the chapter will address the implications these changes have for religion and state relations, and the role of religion in politics, the media, and civil society.

A series of multidisciplinary research projects and programmes focusing on religious change and diversity were initiated after the millennium, of which two were located in the Nordic countries. Much of the source material in this chapter is taken from the NORDCORP (Nordic Collaborative Research Project) project, 'A Comparative Study of the Role of Religion in the Nordic Countries, 1980–2008' (NOREL). NOREL examined religion and state, politics, media, and civil society in all of the Nordic countries. The research programme 'IMPACT of Religion: Challenges for Society, Law, and Democracy' (2008–18) analysed mostly Swedish religion in light of politics, family and law, health, welfare models, and science.<sup>1</sup> Both initiatives have attempted to map increasing religious ↴ diversity and its implications for the wider society, and have furthered interdisciplinary research on religion.

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## Religion and state before 1945

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The Nordic countries are profoundly coloured by their Lutheran traditions. In the course of the Reformation, the Evangelical Lutheran churches were established as state churches in the Nordic configurations of the time, which meant unions of Denmark, Norway, and Iceland on the one hand, and Sweden and Finland on the other. The centuries that followed have been termed 'the period of Lutheran orthodoxy' by church historians, characterized by efforts to maintain an absolute religious monism, and close cooperation between secular and religious authorities, although the churches were not subordinate to secular powers, at least in theory (Gustafsson, 1990: 108). The close ties between the majority churches and the states were evident in their laws and constitutions. In the Norwegian, Icelandic, and Danish constitutions, the respective states expressed preference for the Lutheran churches. Thus, the Norwegian Constitution of 1814 stated that 'the Evangelical Lutheran religion is the official religion of the state' (Gustafsson, 2008: 144). Similarly, the Danish Constitution of 1849 declared that 'the Evangelical Lutheran Church is the Danish popular church and supported as such by the state' (Raun Iversen, 2008: 163); a similar formulation is found in the Icelandic constitution. Additionally, the monarchs in Norway, Denmark, and Sweden were constitutionally bound to profess the Evangelical Lutheran faith, as demonstrated in a Swedish law from 1809: 'The King should always be of the pure Evangelical teaching ... the religion which the Swedish King must confess ... thereby is state religion' (Gustafsson, 2008: 144).

Finland constitutes a unique case with two national churches, the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Orthodox Church. When Finland became independent from Russia in 1917, the 1919 Constitution declared the Finnish state to be religiously neutral, but the Constitutional Act expressed constitutional preference as it defined the Orthodox Church as a national church on a par with the Lutheran Church. The Freedom of Religion Act of 1922 granted freedom of religion, but the Lutheran Church continued to fulfil its traditional role and to receive public funding, as in the other Nordic countries.

Norway and Iceland achieved independence from Denmark, and Finland from Sweden during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but the associated political developments did not alter the religious monopoly of the state churches. Rather, the challenge to the monopolies of these churches came first from Lutheran revival movements, and second from a growing variety of Christian churches in the mid-nineteenth century. The Lutheran revival movements led to the formation of mission organizations inside the frameworks of the state churches, while Roman Catholics, Methodists, and Baptists were established outside these parameters. This resulted in a gradual and reluctant acceptance of religious diversity. For example, Norwegians did not gain the legal right to defect from the Church of Norway until the introduction of ↴ the Dissenter Law in 1845, and Swedes were unable to legally defect from Church of Sweden until 1860 (Gustafsson, 1990: 108).

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During the inter-war period, the Social Democrats became the largest political parties in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. At first, these parties declared in their party platforms that, 'religion is a private matter' and

called for the abolition of the state church system, the freedom of religion, and that the property of the state churches should ‘pass into the possession of society’ (Gustafsson, 1990: 110). Consequently, when these parties formed governments in all three countries in the 1930s, there were marked tensions between the state churches and the Social Democrats, leading to an inevitable question: what would happen to the state church system? Once in government, however, the social democratic parties altered their views and became more cautious. The Danish Social Democrats opted to accept the established system before the Second World War, and the Icelandic Social Democrats followed suit. By 1938, the Norwegian Labour Party had dropped the state church issue from its party platform. And after the war, when a governmental committee proposed an increase in the autonomy of the Church of Norway, the Labour Party representatives in the parliament voted against it. Indeed, by the 1950s, the Labour Party had begun to interpret Christianity as part of Norwegian culture and to support the state church system. The opposition to religion in the Finnish Social Democratic Party was discarded in 1949, but the Swedish Social Democrats did not change their view on the state church system until 1970. Here the decisive turn came when the social democratic minister of church affairs, Alva Myrdal, stated that it was ‘a fundamental principle that society cannot take a negative position to the religious needs of the citizens or to the institutions that try to satisfy these needs’ (Gustafsson, 1990: 110). It is worth noting that the Nordic social democratic parties changed their views on religion at a time when about 90 per cent of their respective populations were members of the state churches, and before these statistics began to decline in the 1970s.

As early as 1682, the first Jewish congregation was established in Denmark, followed by congregations in Sweden in the eighteenth century, and in Norway and Finland in the nineteenth. In 1925, the first Muslim congregation in the Nordic countries was formed in Finland. Signs that the ties between the majority churches and the states were loosening also appeared in the nineteenth century, albeit to a differing degree in the various countries. The Finnish Lutheran Church developed broad autonomy from the state as early as 1870, when the Church Assembly was granted decision-making in internal matters. Similar internal democratic bodies also appeared in the Swedish church in the nineteenth century and in the Norwegian and Icelandic churches in the twentieth. The exception is Denmark, where no representative body on the national level has ever developed (Gustafsson, 1985, 1994).

## Twentieth-century developments

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p. 700 The close ties between many Nordic states and the majority churches lasted until the middle of the twentieth century. In the 1950s, religion became an increasingly ↴ controversial issue in public debate, in which Christianity was either questioned, rejected, or defended. During the 1960s, religion was once again much discussed, but these debates differed from the previous ones, in that they centred on the privileged position of Christianity in public institutions. Many Christian groups claimed that their values were under threat, due to political decisions that changed the place of Christian education in public schools and liberalized the legislation on abortion (Gustafsson, 1994: 38–9).

At the same time, Sweden and Norway also witnessed repeated debates on the issue of church autonomy. From the 1950s to the 1980s, several Swedish state commissions addressed church–state relations. ‘The Church of Sweden Law’ was introduced in 1982, which gave more autonomy to the church. And in 1995, the Swedish parliament took the definitive decision to separate church and state, when a new law was passed defining the Church of Sweden as an open, democratic Lutheran Evangelical church with autonomy from the state—a change that was effected in 2000. In Finland, ‘The Religious Freedom Act’ from 2003 replaced that of 1922 and stated that the role of the state was to secure freedom of religion for everyone in Finland. Today, Finland has a similar situation to that in Sweden.

Norway was the first of these countries to debate autonomy from the state, albeit within the framework of a state church system, but the changes in the relations to the state came later than in Sweden. Partly due to the struggle during the Second World War to maintain an independent church free from the Nazi occupation, the Church of Norway took the initiative in 1948 to form a representative church council with certain governing functions. Once these and other democratic institutions (the annual Church Assembly) were formed, they implied a growing autonomy from the state in internal matters. Not until 2008, however, did there come a definitive agreement between all political parties to separate church and state, followed by a constitutional amendment in 2012 and implementation in 2017.

Since the late 1950s, the Church of Iceland has created various democratic institutions, such as the Church Assembly. A church law of 1997 made the Church of Iceland an independent religious association, although the constitution remained largely the same. The most stable church–state relations are found in Denmark. At the national level, the Danish folk church is a state church with no internal democratic institutions and little or no autonomy from the state; congregational life at the local level has, however, greater independence.

The ‘distance’ between the majority churches and the Nordic states has increased markedly during the past thirty years. That said, the changes in Finland, Iceland, Sweden, and Norway do not represent a sharp division between church and state, since the churches have retained their links to the state, and the state continues to be involved in the area of religion. Overall, the Nordic churches are best described as sub-autonomous, noting that the churches in Sweden, Iceland, and Finland have more autonomy than the Norwegian church, and far more than the Danish equivalent (Kühle *et al.*, 2018).

## A changing religious demography

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Seen in a European context, the Nordic countries are relatively small, albeit growing. During the last three decades (from 1988 to 2019), the Swedish population grew from 8.4 to 10.0 million, the Danish from 5.1 to 5.8 million, the Finnish from 4.9 to 5.6 million, the Norwegian from 4.2 to 5.4 million, and the Icelandic from 251,000 to 340,000. Thus, Sweden is the most populous, Iceland the least, and Denmark, Finland, and Norway lie in the middle. It is immigration that accounts for the population growth. Sweden became the first Nordic destination for migration in the 1960s and 1970s, while Norway and Denmark followed a decade later. Sweden also has had—and continues to have—more liberal immigration policies than the other countries. As a result, Sweden has higher immigration rates, followed by Norway. Immigration, moreover, accounts for a significant change in the area of religion in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark during the last three decades: that is, the growth in religious diversity, a development that is less visible in Finland and Iceland.

To flesh out the religious changes that have taken place in the Nordic populations during these decades, this chapter will examine the data on what are often called the three Bs in the study of religion: belonging, belief, behaviour.

While religious belonging can be studied in various ways, membership in faith communities or worldview (secular humanist or holistic) communities will be the ‘measure’ considered here, starting with the developments between the 1980s and 2014, which formed the core of the NOREL study (Furseth *et al.*, 2018a: 42–52). Membership rates display a steady decline. In the 1980s, about 90 per cent of Nordic people were members of the majority churches. In 2014, this was reduced to 66 per cent in Sweden, 74 per cent in Finland, 75 per cent in Norway and Iceland, and 78 per cent in Denmark. The explanations can be found in immigration and demographic changes, as well as defection and loss of members. In short, a declining proportion of Nordic people support the Lutheran majority churches—a relatively continuous trend in recent decades. At the same time, the ‘nones’, or those who remain outside any faith and worldview

communities have increased.<sup>2</sup> From 1988 to 2014, they have grown from 10 to 24 per cent in Finland, from 2 to 27 per cent in Sweden, from 9 to 19 per cent in Denmark, from 7 to 13 per cent in Norway, and from 7 to 12 per cent in Iceland. Some of the 'nones' have defected from faith and worldview communities, while others have never joined. However, more research is needed to understand the 'nones' and the nuances of their religious and worldview outlooks. All the Nordic countries have secular worldview communities, even if most of them are small with a membership between 300 and 1,200. ↪ The exception is The Norwegian Humanist Association with almost 90,000 members in 2014, or almost 2 per cent of the Norwegian population. Paradoxically, the high membership rate here may explain why Norway appears to have fewer 'nones' than Sweden, Finland, and Denmark.

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Although the majority churches are large in the Nordic countries, there is also a variety of what are termed minority churches. Some caution is needed when considering the relevant data, as the countries vary regarding both the quality of the statistics and the registration of members. For example, there may be an over registration of members in Norway, because the faith communities receive monetary support from the state for each member and some have reported more members than they really have, while there may be an under registration in Denmark, as many faith communities do not receive any state support and do not always report their membership rates.

Baptists, Methodists, and Mormons have a long history in this region, dating back to the mid-nineteenth century, while Pentecostals came in the early twentieth century. Traditionally, the minority churches have been larger in Sweden than the other countries, which they continue to be in absolute numbers, even though they are declining in relative terms. Some churches are growing, however, in particular those who manage to attract new migrants, for example the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox churches. Some minority churches have also grown in Iceland and Norway, where they amounted to 11 and almost 7 per cent of the population respectively in 2014, compared with 6 per cent in Sweden, and about 2 per cent in Denmark and Finland.

Finally, all the Nordic countries have become increasingly diverse in terms of religion. Since the 1980s, there has been a growth of people who belong to faith communities outside Christianity. While these groups amounted to very few in 1980, they grew to 3 per cent of the total population in Norway in 2014, 2 per cent in Iceland, and a little over 1 per cent in Sweden and Denmark. In terms of absolute numbers, members in registered faith communities outside Christianity counted 163,526 in Norway in 2014, 123,156 in Sweden (in 2013), 54,702 in Denmark, 16,316 in Finland, and 5,558 in Iceland (all in 2014). As anticipated the higher memberships in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark reflect the higher immigration rates to these countries.

In 2014, Islam was the second largest religion in all the Nordic countries, except Iceland, where Buddhism took this place. Norway had the largest number of members in Muslim faith communities with 2.6 per cent of the population (132,135), followed by Sweden with 1.1 per cent (110,000 in 2013). The numbers were lower elsewhere, with 0.7 per cent in Denmark (41,437 in 2012), and 0.2 per cent in Finland (12,313 in 2012) and Iceland (841 in 2014). It should be noted that the numbers given here are registered membership rates in Muslim communities, which are estimated to be in the region of one-third of all Muslims. Nonetheless, the total number of Muslims was noticeably higher at the end of the NOREL project than it was at the beginning.

Since 2014, the situation has changed significantly. During the refugee crisis in 2015, a wave of asylum seekers came to the Nordic countries, in the main from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. For a few months, Sweden followed its liberal immigration policies and received 160,000 asylum seekers, more per capita than any other country ↪ in Europe. The other countries also received sizeable numbers, but not nearly as many as Sweden: 32,000 in Finland, 30,000 in Norway, and 10,000 in Denmark (Furseth *et al.*, 2018a: 33–4). According to the Pew Research Center's (2017) estimates, the size of Muslim populations the following year was 8.1 per cent of the total population in Sweden, which is the second highest in Western Europe after France, 5.7 per cent in Norway, 5.4 per cent in Denmark, and 2.7 per cent in Finland.<sup>3</sup> Soon after the crisis,

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Denmark imposed stricter immigration laws, followed by Norway and Finland, and later, Sweden. It is clear, moreover, that the crisis rendered immigration and religion an even more controversial issue in Nordic politics, keeping in mind that religious leaders often offered an alternative view (see below).

Finally, there is also a growth in the numbers of Sikhs, Buddhists, and Hindus in all the Nordic countries, though the numbers are small. The exception are Jewish communities, which have declined in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Finland. In short, the data show that religions outside Christianity, apart from Judaism, are growing in the Nordic countries, a fact explained both by immigration as such and by the growth in the sections of the population with an immigrant history. As immigrants and native-born descendants of immigrants marry and have children, many remain members of their faith communities and recruit their children. Some also convert, especially to Buddhism, but also to Islam and other religions. Thus, these trends demonstrate a process of religious differentiation, where Nordic people move in different directions when it comes to religious belonging (Bäckström et al., 2004; Botvar and Schmidt, 2010; Church Research Institute, 2013; Furseth et al., 2018a).

## Declining beliefs and practices

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Looking solely at membership in faith and worldview communities may lead to the assumption that Nordic people are still relatively religious. Conversely, multiple studies conclude that people in the Nordic countries are disproportionately secular (see for example Norris and Inglehart, 2004). Phil Zuckerman is unequivocal and concludes his study of Sweden and Denmark by saying that these are ‘societies without God’ (Zuckerman, 2008). To understand this situation rather better, this section will examine Nordic beliefs and behaviour in more detail.

Data from the European Values Studies (EVS) from 1981 to 2010 show that religious belief is declining in all the Nordic countries, except Denmark. If we look at belief in God, Swedes score the lowest in (36.9 per cent), while Icelanders score the highest (66.4 per cent) in 2008–10. The Danes are the only ones who report stability at 59 per cent. Those who do not believe have grown in all the countries, except Sweden, where they have decreased and those who doubt have increased. Thus, right across the Nordic countries, the data show increasing secularization at the individual level (Furseth et al., 2018a: 55–6). However, a number of scholars argue that looking at traditional religious beliefs, such as belief in a personal God, gives a rather limited view of the religious changes that are taking place. Instead, religion itself is changing in the sense that it is becoming more individualized and more subjective. A study revealed, for example, that older generations believed that religion existed outside of themselves, in the form of a deity or religious prescriptions which provided moral guidelines, while younger generations thought that the source of religion’s truth and morality was located in the inner, subjective self (Furseth, 2005). Interestingly, this shift has not only taken place in the Christian tradition, but has also affected younger Muslims (Jacobsen, 2005). Other studies have shown that religious dogma is becoming less important, balanced by a growing orientation towards ‘softer’ forms of religion that emphasize feel-good experiences (Repstad and Henriksen, 2005).

It is clear that alternative spirituality is growing in the Nordic countries, but the detail varies. If we look at one item in particular in the EVS studies from 1990 to 2009, that is, belief in reincarnation, this has grown in Denmark (15 per cent to 17 per cent) and Norway (15 per cent to 18 per cent), while it has remained stable in Sweden (16 per cent) and Iceland (32 per cent), and declined in Finland (from 26 per cent to 18 per cent). The higher numbers in Iceland can be explained by the fact that since the early nineteenth century, spiritualism, called *spiritism*, grew both inside and outside the Lutheran Church and has remained embedded in the Icelandic religious field.



Religious practice may imply a variety of activities, to light a candle, practise yoga, spend time outdoors, meditate, read sacred scriptures, go to meetings, carry religious symbols, and so forth. It is difficult to obtain comparable data across countries on many of these activities. However, there are data on more traditional forms of religious practice, such as participation in rites of passage and attendance at church and religious meetings.

While rites of passage, such as baptism, confirmations, weddings, and funerals were traditionally arranged by the majority churches, minority churches, and other faith communities, there is a rich variety of such rites today. In all the Nordic countries, secular and holistic confirmations are readily available, and secular name-giving ceremonies, weddings, and funerals are widely present. Private name-giving ceremonies are also popular. Traditionally, there have been relatively high rates of participation in rites of passage in the majority churches. However, since the 1970s there has been a drop in infant baptism, confirmation, and church weddings across the region, while church funerals have declined less. For example, between 1978 and 2013/14 infant baptism declined in Sweden (76 per cent to 49 per cent) and Norway (91 per cent to 62 per cent), with somewhat smaller falls in Denmark (85 per cent to 66 per cent) and Finland (93 per cent to 72 per cent). The data for Iceland is only available until 1998, at which point it remained stable at a little over 90 per cent.

p. 705 The pattern of relatively high rates of participation in rites of passage and low rates of church attendance has been observed since the early twentieth century. In 2008–9, <sup>1</sup> about half the population had never attended church or religious meetings outside the rites of passage. This group is highest in Sweden (66 per cent) and lowest in Denmark (44 per cent); it had increased in Finland since 1990, but remained relatively stable in Sweden, Norway, and Iceland. In contrast, this pattern had declined in Denmark. Nordic people differ most when it comes to church attendance on special occasions, such as Christmas and Easter. Fewer Swedes and Finns attend, while this group remains stable in Norway and Iceland. The exception is Denmark, where those who attend the Danish folk church on such occasions have increased since 1990 (from 18 per cent to 31 per cent). This seems to suggest a slight ‘religious turn’ in Denmark, in contrast to the other Nordic countries (Furseth *et al.*, 2018: 56).

Taking all of these measures into consideration, Sweden is the most secular country, while Iceland is the least. Norway and Finland are somewhere in the middle, but they resemble Sweden when it comes to decline in religious faith and a growing number of people who never attend religious gatherings. The exception is Denmark, where religious faith remains stable and the number of people who never attend church is declining. This change may be related to debates on immigration and integration, which have been more polarized in Denmark than in the other countries. As indicated in the following sections, religion—and especially Islam—has been particularly politicized here, leading to a corresponding emphasis on the link between Lutheranism and Danish national and ethnic identity (Gustafsson, 1985, 1994; Furseth *et al.*, 2018a).

## Religion and politics

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Until the 1980s, religion was largely a ‘non-issue’ in Nordic politics. The exception is Norway, where religion has long been controversial, largely due to the presence of the Christian People’s Party that opposed the legalization of abortion, and favoured the teaching of Christianity in public schools. A quantitative study of references to religion in Nordic parliamentary debates in 1988/9, 1998/9, 2008/9 revealed, however, that the total number of speeches related to religion grew in all countries, except Sweden (Lindberg, 2014; Lövheim *et al.*, 2018). A follow-up study in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark in 2018/19 showed similar trends (Lindberg, 2020). At the same time there has been a shift in the Scandinavian parliamentary debates away from Christianity towards Islam. This was particularly evident in Denmark, where debates on Islam rose dramatically, while there were fewer such discussions in Norway, and fewer still in Sweden. The rise in Denmark may be related to the so-called cartoon crisis in 2005, when the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* published a series of cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad, which led to protests around the world and, in some cases, riots, and attacks on churches and embassies. The episode generated a protracted global controversy (Linde-Laursen, 2007).

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The increase in references to religion in parliamentary debates, especially in Denmark, and to a lesser degree in Norway, may also be related to the establishment of right-wing populist parties in both countries in the 1970s. These were initially anti-tax and anti-government parties, but gradually began to voice anti-immigration, and eventually anti-Islamic views. The Danish People’s Party (*Dansk Folkeparti*) received 12.3 per cent of the votes in the 2011 parliamentary election, a proportion which rose to 21.1 per cent in 2015. The Norwegian Progress Party obtained 22.9 per cent of the votes in 2009, which declined to 16.3 per cent in 2013. The decline in Norway can be explained by the terror attack on 22 July 2011, which became associated with this party, as a previous member and right-wing extremist Anders Behring Breivik bombed the governmental buildings in central Oslo, killing eight people and wounding more than thirty. He then headed to the Labour Party’s youth camp on the island of Utøya, where he shot and murdered sixty-nine youth participants and wounded a further sixty-six. Breivik justified his attacks by referring to Islamophobic ideas regarding the threat of Eurabia to European Christendom, also attacking feminists and so-called ‘cultural Marxists,’ as he thought the latter were permissive towards Muslims.

As already noted, Denmark and Norway imposed stricter immigration laws after the refugee crisis in 2015. It seems, however, that the Nordic populations disagree with the populist parties on this issue, a trend that can be seen in parliamentary elections. The votes for the Danish People’s Party decreased from 21.1 per cent in 2015 to 8.7 per cent in 2019, and support for the Norwegian Progress Party continued to decline to 15.2 per cent in 2019. Another explanation for the decrease in support is the higher integration of these parties in the political system. For example, the Danish People’s Party has increasingly assisted the government, becoming bit by bit an accepted political player (Herkman, 2016: 475–6). The Progress Party changed its profile to a mainstream conservative party after the 2011 terror attack, and became part of a conservative coalition during 2013–19. That said, it left the coalition in protest against the government’s decision to help a Norwegian mother of two, accused of participating in the Islamic State, return from the Al-Hol camp in Syria. It is possible, however, that the main reason for leaving was to increase its chances at the 2021 election.

Reference to religion in parliamentary debates in Iceland and Finland has also experienced growth. The increase in Finland may be related to the growth of a right-wing populist party that was established in the mid-1990s, although the rapid expansion of this party came later—in 2011 when it received 19 per cent of the votes in the parliamentary election. In 2019 support for the party declined slightly to 17.6 per cent. The situation is different in Sweden. Surprisingly, the populist and right-wing Swedish Democrats received 5.7 per cent of the votes in 2010, a percentage which grew to 12.9 per cent in 2014. And while the right-wing populist parties have decreased in Denmark, Norway, and Finland since the refugee crisis, the Swedish

Democrats increased to 17.5 per cent in 2018. Similarly, while the other parties have engaged with the right-wing populist parties in Denmark and Norway, the strategy in Sweden has been to ignore the Swedish Democrats. This may explain the lower and rather more stable rates of references to religion in parliamentary debates in Sweden, but also that some disagree with this approach and register their protest by voting for the Democrats.

p. 707 Altogether, there seems to be a process of greater politicization of religion in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, and to some degree in Finland. The right-wing populist parties in these countries refer to Christianity as part of national identity in their political party platforms, where they describe the Christian tradition as one of the foundations of society, linked to specific national characters. The Danish People's Party went so far as to claim that 'only the Judaeo-Christian, Western cultural sphere has managed to do away with the medieval worldview' in their 2009 manifesto (Lövhelm *et al.*, 2018: 157). These parties tend to politicize both Islam and Christianity as part of their anti-immigration and 'protection of local culture' agendas.

The controversies over religion were also seen in a further terror attack that took place in Denmark on 14 February 2015, when the Islamic extremist Omar Abdel Hamid El-Hussain entered a cultural centre in Copenhagen, where he shot and murdered a civilian and wounded three police officers. His target was the Swedish cartoonist, Lars Vilks, who was not hurt. (Vilks had drawn cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad in 2007, and had received death threats in the wake of the Danish cartoon controversies.) Later the same night, El-Hussain shot and killed Dan Uzan, a Jewish volunteer security guard outside the Great Synagogue in Copenhagen during a Bar Mitzvah celebration. El-Hussain opened fire on the police and was himself shot. Controversies over religion can have fatal results even in the Nordic countries.

## Religion and the media

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The shift in the Nordic parliaments since the late 1980s with a growing focus on Islam and declining emphasis on Christianity is also found in the media. A content analysis of fourteen main newspapers from all the Nordic countries for the years 1988, 1998, and 2008 revealed first that attention to religion increased across all countries, except Iceland (Gresaker, 2013). Second, there was a shift in emphasis from religion as news to debates about religion, and especially Islam, but more so in the three Scandinavian countries than in Finland and Iceland. Third, as attention to Islam grows, the coverage of Christianity is declining. This is particularly evident in the main news in Danish newspapers, followed by Sweden and Norway. Finland, meanwhile, has a more continuous coverage of Islam, while Iceland has a growing coverage of the Lutheran majority church. Overall, these trends suggest greater contestation around religion, a trend particularly evident in Scandinavia.

That said, the media genre in which religion appears is of considerable importance in this analysis. For example, a study of the coverage of religion in men's and women's lifestyle magazines and family weeklies (with the exception of Icelandic magazines) in the same time period revealed that in contrast to the newspapers, there was a growing emphasis on alternative spiritualities as the main topic. The coverage of Christianity was also strong, although it was declining (except in Sweden), and there was a slight increase in the coverage of Islam. In contrast to the newspapers, where religion increasingly was a controversial issue, these magazines tended to represent religion as a 'feelgood' factor related to individual needs and interests rather than to national debates (Gresaker, 2013).

## Interfaith infrastructure and religious leadership

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It is clear that both immigration and the growing religious diversity that follows have made religion a controversial issue in Nordic politics. In this situation, religious leaders have offered an alternative approach. A principal strategy in this respect has been to come together and engage in interfaith initiatives. A previous Nordic study, covering the years between 1930 and 1980, showed few such initiatives (Gustafsson, 1985, 1994). However, an interfaith infrastructure has developed since then, which consists of various bilateral and multilateral bodies in all the countries, except Denmark. These bodies act as advocacy groups and lobby both state and local governments. Some publish statements that relate only to their own activities, while others present views on a wide range of socio-political issues, such as social justice, the environment, immigration, and global issues. Local interfaith initiatives are found in all the Nordic countries, but the interfaith infrastructure is stronger in Norway, Finland, and Sweden, where the state is supportive of such activities.

An interview study of Norwegian national religious leaders conducted in 2011–12 revealed that they tended to be left-oriented in their views on environmental issues and income inequality, and favour less restrictive immigration and asylum policies (Furseth *et al.*, 2018b). Many such leaders lobbied state and local governments and used the media to influence public policies on religion and other issues. Although this leadership study is not representative of the other Nordic countries, it is reasonable to believe that the results would be somewhat similar, but more research is needed to verify this.

During the refugee crisis in 2015, majority and minority churches in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland mobilized. For example, in October 2015 the leader of the Church of Norway Council wrote a letter to all congregations saying that Church of Norway was part of a coalition that demanded that the government welcome 10,000 refugees, and encouraging local congregations to aid with housing and other practical issues (Church of Norway, 2015). Some church leaders, moreover, have openly opposed right-wing populist parties—for example the Swedish Bishop of Stockholm, Eva Brunne, who spoke out against racism during the church service following the opening of the Swedish parliament in 2010, an intervention which prompted the leader of the Swedish Democrats to leave the service (*Svenska Dagbladet*, 2017). In short, in a context of increasing contestation around religion, many faith and worldview communities and their leaders encourage cooperation between different religions, and call for less restrictive immigration policies, especially regarding refugees (Furseth *et al.*, 2018b).

## Religious complexity

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Profound changes have taken place in the Nordic countries since the 1970s and 1980s. Immigration has made all of them more religiously diverse, especially Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. These countries have gone from religious and ethnic homogeneity (comparatively speaking) to far greater diversity in a relatively short time. The result is that mainstream Christianity continues to decline, while religions outside Christianity are growing. Some Christian minorities are also growing, particularly the Catholics and Orthodox. In addition, immigration and the formation of religious minority groups intensify the challenges facing the Nordic countries and their welfare states. The growth of religious minorities puts pressures on church–state relations, with the effect that political arrangements that gave the majority churches privileges are no longer seen as legitimate. These questions are frequently debated among politicians and in the media, meaning that religion is more rather than less visible in the public sphere. Does this mean that religion has become more important for the Nordic populations?

The answer to this question appears to be negative. There are multiple trends in the Nordic countries that do not support the idea that ‘God is back’ in the lives of the people who live there. The economic, political, and

familial changes since the 1970s and 1980s have led to greater individualization—shifts which support the idea of the privatization of religion among Nordic people. Although there are organized activities within the alternative milieus, the subjective approach in these sectors of society is part of a larger cultural trend that affects all religious traditions. The data on religious beliefs and practices also show growing secularization. These findings are consistent with earlier studies that showed similar trends as far back as the 1930s (Gustafsson, 1985, 1994). The exception is Denmark, where a slight religious turn can be detected.

The trends in the Nordic countries have been termed ‘religious complexity’, a meta-theoretical concept that refers to the presence of several, and sometimes contradictory, religious trends that may coexist at different levels in society (Furseth 2018, 2021). Nordic religious complexity displays a situation of greater secularization at the individual level alongside a growing visibility of religion in politics, the media, and at the level of faith and worldview communities (that is, civil society), as is the case across much of Europe (Woodhead and Catto, 2012; Davie, 2015; Stolz *et al.*, 2015). Religion–state relations are similarly complex, in that Nordic states are in some ways becoming more secular, but in other ways, are increasingly involved in the area of religion (Kühle *et al.*, 2018).

Growing religious complexity results in several conflicting tendencies. On the one hand, it creates greater contestations, tensions, and conflict. Many public debates on religion can be seen in this light (Lundby, 2018). Religious minorities (Muslims, Sikhs, Jews, and others) are claiming equal rights to practise their religion in public. Secular populations, however, react to these claims with little understanding, as they think that religion belongs in the private sphere and should not be brought into public life. The majority may also respond by asserting their Christian beliefs and attending church at Christmas and Easter or similar occasions, as seen in Denmark. On the other hand, religious complexity may result in a growing understanding regarding different ways of being religious. Even if Nordic people have become more secular over time, surveys of Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians from 2004 to 2008 all showed a growing tolerance for religious individuals (Lövheim *et al.*, 2018: 150–5).

## Conclusion

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Since the 1970s, profound religious changes have taken place in the Nordic countries. The ties between the states and the Lutheran majority churches have loosened, and only Denmark has a traditional state church. These churches are challenged by declining membership, attendance, and participation. Immigration has transformed Sweden, Norway, and Denmark into relatively diverse countries, while Finland and Iceland remain more homogeneous. The complexity is evident in the growing individual secularization, which has occurred at the same time that religion has become more visible in public life. While religion was politically a non-issue in the past, except in Norway, it has become noticeably more politicized and visible in the media, and controversies over religion have shifted from Christianity to Islam. Leaders of faith and worldview communities have responded to these changes by forming interfaith bodies, initiating dialogue, and participating in public debates, which also make religion more visible. Thus, growing religious complexity can result in increased tension, controversy, and conflict, but equally in a greater understanding of different ways of being religious.

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## Notes

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- 1 NOREL was directed by Inger Furseth and funded by the Joint Committee for Nordic Research Councils in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NOS-HS) and KIFO Institute for Church, Religion and Worldview Research, see



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- 2 Secular humanists and holistic communities are included among 'worldview communities' in the following discussion, as they are acknowledged as such by the Norwegian state. *Statistics Norway* uses the term 'lifestance communities', see for example, <https://www.ssb.no/en/kultur-og-fritid/statistikker/trosamf/aar>.
- 3 It is important to note the status of these data—these are estimates of the number of Muslims in the Nordic countries as opposed to the registered members recorded by NOREL.

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CHAPTER

## 41 Southeast Europe

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### Abstract

This chapter charts the religious landscape of Southeast Europe and considers its religious specificities in their historical and geographical context. To this purpose, it discusses the significance of the Orthodox Christian heritage of Byzantium; the cleavage between Eastern and Western Christianity (both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism) and inter-confessional dynamics; the presence of Islam and the long period of Ottoman rule; the existence of other religions in the region; the role of Russia in Southeast European affairs; ethno-religious identities and the rise of nationalism; the communist and the post-communist periods; and finally, the negative discourse about the Balkans in the context of Southeast European distinctiveness, the modernization process, and the potential for religion in this.

**Keywords:** [Southeast Europe](#), [Orthodox Christianity](#), [Byzantium](#), [Roman Catholicism](#), [Protestantism](#), [Islam](#), [nationalism](#), [Communism](#), [modernization](#), [distinctiveness](#)

**Subject:** [History of Religion](#), [Religion](#)

**Series:** [Oxford Handbooks](#)

THE term ‘Southeast Europe’ (SEE), first coined by the Austrian diplomat and scholar of Albanian studies Johann Georg von Hahn (1811–69), is used to denote a geographical area in Europe, whose exact boundaries or states are not firmly defined. This is due to a range of political, cultural, and historical reasons. In alphabetical order, this area usually includes: Albania, Bosnia–Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, and the European part of Turkey (East Thrace). The same approach applies to two related terms: ‘Eastern Europe’ and ‘East–Central Europe’. ‘Southeast Europe’, finally, is a broader term than ‘the Balkans’, which refers solely to the states of the Balkan peninsula. More importantly, the former implies no value judgements, whereas the label ‘Balkans’ was and still is connected with negative stereotypes about this region, especially from a West European perspective.

Due to its particular geographical position, SEE has played a key role in connecting the rest of Europe with Asia and especially the Near East. It has acted both as a transit area through which various migrating peoples (including their religions) entered the European continent, and as a place of settlement for many of them. This pertains to the long migration period in late Antiquity (fourth to sixth centuries) and especially

to the migration of the Slavs (sixth to ninth centuries), many of whom (for instance, the Bulgarians) settled permanently in SEE. The same holds true for Islam, which at different stages and in various forms (not least the Ottomans) became established in SEE. It is thus a diachronic phenomenon, observed most recently during the ‘refugee crisis’ of 2015, given that a key route to Western Europe went unavoidably through SEE. Both historically and now, this contributed not only to population and other changes and thus to concomitant tensions and conflicts, but also to greater ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural diversity. SEE was an area of enhanced religious contacts. One way to grasp the religious specificities of SEE is to consider them within their broader historical, social, political, and cultural context—namely their position in a highly distinctive part of Europe, which exhibits particular characteristics.

## The East Roman (Byzantine) and Orthodox Christian heritage

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A decisive period can be found in the East Roman (Byzantine) Empire, whose territories covered most of what is considered geographically SEE and which officially endorsed and supported the Christian religion in its Orthodox form. The longevity of this empire (330–1453) and its multifaceted impact were instrumental in shaping the contours of East European history and development. Worth mentioning here is the ‘Byzantine Commonwealth’ (Obolensky, 2000), namely the community of numerous peoples whose destiny was decisively shaped by extensive Byzantine influences. The expression ‘Byzantium after Byzantium’ (Iorga, 1935) points in addition to the lasting influence of Byzantine culture even after the demise of the empire.

In terms of religion, the Roman Empire officially adopted Christianity in 380 as its official ‘state religion’ and retained an Orthodox Christian character throughout its history, in both East and West. This had tremendous consequences in the long run. In the East, this led to the gradual rise of the Patriarchate of Constantinople as the most important ecclesiastical see, bearing the label ‘Ecumenical’ since the end of the sixth century and enjoying trans-regional power and authority. The Christianization of numerous peoples in SEE was due to systematic Byzantine missions. These concerned the various Slavic peoples in the area (Bulgarians, Serbs, and so on), who were greatly influenced in view of their ethno-genesis and cultural development (for example, alphabetization). There is also an important monastic heritage throughout SEE connected with this development (on Mount Athos, and in Kosovo, Bukovina, and Moldavia). Orthodoxy, therefore, remains a dominant religion in many states of contemporary SEE. The appropriation of the Byzantine legacy proved, however, to be controversial, as many different peoples laid claim to being exclusive heirs to this rich heritage (Alshanskaya, Gietzen and Hadjiafrenti, 2018).

Clear evidence of the lasting Byzantine influence pertains to the issue of church–state politics relations in predominantly Orthodox countries. This goes back to the Byzantine tradition of symphony between *imperium* and *sacerdotium* and their common divine origin, legitimation, complementarity, and cooperation (Barker, 1961). This model was fundamentally different from the Latin one with regard to the independence of the church from political control, which has led to the separation of church and state in Western Europe from the early modern period onwards. The Byzantine symphony no longer survives and cannot be implemented in full today, yet there exists a striking closeness between church and state in predominantly Orthodox countries, and a noticeable Orthodox ‘colouring’ of the public sphere, pointing to the specificities of this religious and cultural milieu. The significance of Orthodox Christianity for cultural identity is also publicly emphasized.

This dependence on the state has, however, been criticized as detrimental to the church’s real interests, noting that the opposition of the church to political regimes ↴ has generally been stronger in the Latin West than in the Orthodox East. That said, the strong intertwining of church and state in the East did not neutralize completely the church’s resistance to state policies.

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## The East–West cleavage and confessional differences

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Aside from Orthodox Christianity, other Christian churches and confessions are found in SEE. This includes the Catholics, who have a lasting presence here; several regions have been contested jurisdictionally between East and West (for example, the Illyricum until the eighth century). The antagonistic East–West relations also involved other issues, ranging from the political to the theological, which eventually led to the definitive schism between them in 1054. Such problems, however, were already evident at an earlier stage, as in the dispute between Pope Nicholas I (858–67) and Patriarch of Constantinople Photios (858–67, 877–86) regarding the Christianization of the Bulgarians in the ninth century. Political calculations and geographical coordinates also played a role in this context. The north–western part of SEE, which was closer to Rome, mostly followed Latin Christianity—for example the Slovenes and Croats. The opposite was the case in the south–western part of SEE, which followed the Orthodox tradition—the Serbs and (Slavic) Macedonians. Catholicism is thus the majority religion in some countries of SEE and a minority in other cases (Greece, Albania). Catholic identity was strongly connected with the ethno–genesis of peoples in SEE. There are also popular Catholic pilgrimage sites, including one dating from 1981 in Bosnia–Herzegovina in honour of ‘Our Lady of Medjugorje’ that goes back to an alleged series of apparitions of the Virgin Mary to six local children.

Some Catholic communities were historically present in SEE (for example, in the Cyclades), while others appeared in more recent times, as parts of SEE were gradually integrated into the Habsburg Monarchy from the sixteenth century onwards (Vojvodina, Transylvania, Bosnia–Herzegovina). In Transylvania, there were also Uniate Christians, accepting papal authority, yet following the Byzantine liturgical tradition (Maner and Spannenberger, 2007). In the eighteenth century, there was political pressure in the Habsburg Monarchy to promote Uniatism as a means of uniting the Orthodox with Catholics, although Uniate Christians did not enjoy the same rights as mainstream Catholics. There were also Catholic missionary activities (notably by the Jesuits) in SEE. Unsurprisingly, this constant flux led to frictions, as discrimination went one way or the other depending on the political situation. This happened with the Orthodox Serbs under the Habsburgs (1848–1918) and with the Catholic Croats in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1929–41). Such tensions were exacerbated during the Second World War under the Croat fascist and ultranationalist Ustashe regime (1941–4), which had close connections to the Catholic Church (to Cardinal Aloysius Viktor Stepinac, 1898–1960: Archbishop of Zagreb, 1937–60). The same happened during the Yugoslav Wars (1991–9/2001) with grave consequences. However, the Catholic–Orthodox interaction was not always conflictual. Long–term inter–confessional coexistence also led to various forms of peaceful collaboration and even intercommunion on a local basis. In border regions between East and West (Dalmatia, Vojvodina, Transylvania) or in areas with a significant Catholic population (the Ionian islands, the Cyclades, and Crete), there was a mixture of influences in church architecture, sacred painting, and religious practices. In Albania, also, there is a sizeable Catholic minority, which lived relatively peacefully with the other religions located there. Mother Teresa (1910–97), the well–known Catholic nun and missionary, was of Albanian origin and was born in Skopje, the current capital of North Macedonia.

Confessional plurality in SEE was further enhanced by the Reformation. Contacts between Protestants and Orthodox go back to the sixteenth century, including the correspondence between the Patriarch of Constantinople Jeremias II Tranos (1572–9, 1580–4, 1587–95) and Protestant theologians from Tübingen (1573–81). A number of contacts continued later, as various groups (for example, Anglicans, Pietists, Mennonites, and American Protestants) missionized in SEE, creating their own communities, which triggered not only Orthodox, but also Catholic reactions. The tragic death of Patriarch of Constantinople Cyril Loukaris (1638) aptly illustrates this inter–confessional strife (Nosilia and Prandoni, 2015). Protestantism also reached SEE through migration; for example, by Saxons and Swabians in Transylvania, Banat, and Bukovina. Interestingly, the Romanian president since 2014, Klaus Johannis, stems from a

Transylvanian Saxon family and is member of the Evangelical Church of Augustan Confession in Romania. Protestants in SEE are mostly Lutherans and have been active in ecumenical endeavours. But there are also other denominations, such as the Apostolic Christian Church (Nazarene) from the USA, which worked among the Serbs in the 1860s in the region of Vojvodina (Aleksov, 2006).

## The presence of Islam and the significance of Ottoman rule

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Due to its long presence in SEE, Islam constitutes a crucial aspect of its religious landscape. Because of geographical proximity, centuries-old coexistence and various historical entanglements, Orthodox Christians articulated a relationship with Muslims rather different from their Western Latin counterparts. Aside from periods of conflict, many Orthodox considered a submission to or an alliance with Islam as a means—according to Divine Providence—to protect Orthodoxy from a Latin takeover.

p. 717 The first engagements with Islam took place in Byzantium due to the rapid Arab expansion in the islands and on the coasts of the Mediterranean from the seventh century onwards. There were several Arab–Byzantine wars between the seventh and the eleventh centuries, leading to significant territorial losses for Byzantium. There were also two unsuccessful sieges of Constantinople (674–8 and 717–8) by the Umayyad Caliphate. But conflictual encounters did not preclude occasional peaceful coexistence between Orthodox and Muslims—mosques existed even in Constantinople for the Muslims residing there (El-Cheikh, 2004). In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Byzantines engaged in repeated conflicts with the Seljuk Turks, who had invaded Anatolia, captured most of Asia Minor and created the Sultanate of the Rum (1077–1307). More decisive, however, was the subsequent rise of the Ottoman Turks, capturing the fort of Gallipoli (1354), thus gaining access to SEE. They later defeated various Balkan peoples: the Bulgarians (1385) by capturing Sofia and the Serbs in the Battle of Kosovo (1389). The culmination of their victories was the capture of Constantinople (1453), which meant the definitive end of the Byzantine Empire and the beginning of a long Ottoman rule for SEE until the early twentieth century. This development not only shaped the modern history of SEE, but also created a number of Muslim populations that survive until today.

In the Ottoman Empire, there existed a symbiotic relationship of its various subjects and religions based on the *millet* system, which allowed for some ‘religious freedom’ as long as loyalty to the Ottoman authorities and the payment of taxes (head tax) were guaranteed. However, this did not prevent conversions to Islam, either by force or by free will. There was, for example, a tradition of Crypto-Christians, who officially converted to Islam while preserving their Christian identity and practices in secret. At the same time, the Ottomans used to convert and educate young Christian boys, in order to employ them later in the civil or military service. The case of the Albanian nobleman George Castriot (Skanderberg) (1405–68), a hero of modern Albania, is indicative of this process, although he became a renegade leader afterwards, returning to Christianity, and organizing various military campaigns against the Ottomans. The large Orthodox population of varied ethnic origin was united under the Patriarch of Constantinople as its leader, who obtained rights beyond religion pertaining to civil authority (for example, in law and education) (Kitromilides, 2007). Patriarchs often became victims of turbulent political developments, as was the case with Patriarch Gregory V (1797–8, 1806–8, 1818–21) in 1821 after the eruption of the Greek War of Independence. Ottoman rule operated differently depending on the region. A greater Islamization process took place in the Albanian area, in Bosnia-Herzegovina and south-west Bulgaria. But the mountainous region of Montenegro was never under full Ottoman control and enjoyed considerable autonomy. The Danubian Principalities (Wallachia and Moldavia) came under formal Ottoman suzerainty in 1476 and 1538 respectively, but retained their ‘official’ autonomy by paying tribute as vassal states. Their political control passed later to the Phanariots (1711–1821), a cluster of wealthy, well-educated, and influential families of varied ethnic provenance.

In the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most peoples in SEE became independent and created their own nation-states to the detriment of the Ottoman Empire, which was abolished in 1923 through the founding of modern Turkey by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938). Despite attempts to de-Ottomanize or de-Islamize SEE, the Ottoman legacy remains a key factor in the entire region. On the religious level, this is evident in countries with a majority of Muslim population (96 per cent in Kosovo, 56 per cent in Albania, 51 per cent in Bosnia-Herzegovina) or with a considerable or smaller Muslim minority (39.3 per cent in North Macedonia, 20 per cent in Montenegro, 8 per cent in Bulgaria) (Elbasani and Roy, 2015). Historically, SEE contains the Order of Bektashi and the Sufi ‘Whirling Dervishes’ (*Mevlevi*). But most Muslims are mainstream Sunnis and follow a more liberal line. For the most part, they constitute a ‘European’ form of Islam, thought to be compatible with core European values and modernity. Since 1977 there has been a Faculty of Islamic Theology in Sarajevo, whose graduates seek to adapt Islam to modern exigencies. On a local basis, there were and still are fluid borders between Muslims and Christians, especially regarding religious practice—these include the veneration by Muslims of Mary and Christian saints (Lauer and Majer, 2014).

Muslims in minority contexts were often marginalized and took the decision to migrate to majority Muslim states (for example, from Bulgaria and Bosnia-Herzegovina to Turkey). Things have changed since the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992–5), when Islamic identity became a key marker of the afflicted Muslims. There was strong support for Bosnian Muslims from leading Islamic countries, coupled with pressures to follow Islamic principles more precisely. Without neutralizing the liberal Islamic heritage, this led to a retraditionalization and even a radicalization of Islam. This was also due to the reactivation and dissemination of old legends about the Christian origins of Muslims in the area, given that their Islamization was portrayed as a betrayal of ethnic and Orthodox identity—see, for example, the popular epic poem *The Mountain Wreath* by the Montenegrin Prince-Bishop and poet Petar II Petrović-Njegoš (1813–51). Such conflicts were also transferred to neighbouring areas; for example, to Kosovo and its overwhelmingly Albanian Muslim population during its long conflict with Serbia, both before and after Kosovo’s independence (2008).

Relations between Muslims and Christians in SEE were mostly dictated by socio-political circumstances. In Greece, there is a historical Muslim minority of Turkish and Slavic Pomak origin in West Thrace and in some Dodecanese islands (about 120,000 in all). However, the rise of a ‘new Islam’ in Greece in recent decades brought about by Muslim immigrants from numerous countries (Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and so on) and the aggravation of the ‘refugee crisis’ since 2015 due to the civil war in Syria have led to demographic changes and growing Islamophobia, which, inter alia, considerably delayed the erection of an official mosque in Athens (inaugurated in November 2020). The integration of this ‘new Islam’ in SEE constitutes one of the most serious challenges that this region has to face in the coming decades. A recent survey (Pew Research Center, 2018a) has revealed more negative attitudes towards religious minorities (more precisely Muslims and Jews) in Eastern than in Western Europe.

## Religious plurality and diversity

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p. 719 The religious landscape of SEE also includes Judaism. Jews were dispersed across the Roman Empire, especially after the destruction of Jerusalem (70), while Hellenized ↴ Romaniote Jews also settled in SEE. Jews managed to survive in the Byzantine Empire and to take up various activities, despite discrimination. In general, however, anti-Semitism during the Middle Ages was weaker here than in Western Europe. A turning point was the expulsion of Sephardi Jews from Spain and Portugal at the end of the fifteenth century and their permanent settlement in the Ottoman Empire (Benbassa and Rodrigue, 1995). There they developed significantly and formed important communities (for example, in Constantinople, Thessalonica, Smyrna, and Vitola/Monastir). The case of Sabbatai Zevi (1626–76), the founder of the Sabbatean movement, is important—he claimed to be the long-awaited Jewish Messiah. Some Jews also converted to Islam, but retained their Jewish tradition in secret (*Dönme*), and played a significant role in Ottoman and Turkish politics.

A further Jewish tradition was of East European origin (Ashkenazi), and was present in the northern part of SEE (in Vojvodina, Moldavia, and Bukovina), especially during the Habsburg period. Romania was the country with the biggest Jewish population in SEE, which led in turn to growing anti-Semitism (see, for example, a popular Greek anti-Jewish book published in Iași in 1818). Given that Jews entertained good relations with the Ottomans, they were often targeted by the Greek insurrectionists in 1821. Pogroms or various anti-Jewish actions took place later, especially as pro-fascist or pro-Nazi regimes gained power in the region (for example, the dictatorial regime of Ion Antonescu in Romania, 1940–4, and the Ustashe regime in Croatia). The German occupation of SEE during the Second World War led to the extinction of many historical communities (notably in Thessalonica). Nevertheless, some Orthodox actors (in Greece and Bulgaria) assisted Jews to escape Nazi persecution (Hassiotis, 1997).

The post-war period proved to be difficult for the Jewish population in SEE. They had to cope with the trauma of the Holocaust, with new forms of discrimination on the part of communist authorities, and with exploitation by the Orthodox. This led, in turn, to considerable migration to Israel and abroad. Anti-Semitic positions can be seen among Orthodox prelates (including the Serbian Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović, 1881–1956) or among extreme right-wing ideologues. Along with popular forms of anti-Semitism (for example, the fabricated and widely disseminated text *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* concerning the Jewish conspiracy for world domination), these gestures attest to the lingering of negative attitudes towards the Jewish people.

SEE is rich in minority religious cultures. In Byzantium, this holds true for the dualist movement of the Bogomils from the tenth century onwards. Bogomils faced persecution, but managed to survive; they are sometimes known as the ‘Bosnian Church’. Nowadays, religious diversity also includes vernacular forms of Christianity that are popular in local contexts (for instance, the fire-walking practices, called *Anastenaria*, in northern Greece and southern Bulgaria). Also present are the Old Calendarists, that is the groups of Orthodox Christians who initially split from the Greek Orthodox Church because of the calendar reform in 1924 and then spread to other SEE countries. In addition, there are esoteric movements of indigenous or foreign origin, such as the ‘White Brotherhood’, founded by Peter Deunov (1864–1944) in Bulgaria. And in recent decades, there have been systematic attempts to revive the ancient Hellenic religion of Greece to the detriment of Orthodox Christianity. Traditionally, such marginal movements faced ↴ suppression and persecution, but the gradual liberalization of the religious landscape has enabled their public emergence (Makrides, 2009).

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## The role of Russia in Southeast European affairs

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Not only politically, but also religiously Russia has played a significant role in SEE, especially after the fall of Byzantium, when it became a new centre of Orthodox power and influence. Increasingly Russia claimed the Byzantine political, cultural, and religious heritage and bit by bit emerged as the defender of Orthodox co-religionists under Ottoman rule. This led to the widespread ‘Russian expectation’, namely the potential intervention of Russia for the liberation of the Orthodox, which became stronger from the reign of Tsar Peter I (r. 1682–1725) onwards. In the wake of several wars, mostly victorious for the Russian side, Russia expanded territorially to the Black Sea. The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca (July 1774), ending the Russo–Ottoman war (1768–74) under Catherine the Great (r. 1762–96), was beneficial for the Orthodox, providing amnesty for them and allowing them to sail freely under the Russian flag and settle in Russian territories. This led to a massive Orthodox migration from SEE to the northern shore of the Black Sea.

Russia’s role in SEE continued in the support of the Serbian (1804–13, 1815–7) and Greek (1821–9) insurrections against the Ottomans, and of the rising Slavic nationalism in the attempts to create independent nation-states. Although Russia’s strategy was initially centred on the common Orthodox bond, the focus shifted after the Crimean War (1853–6) to the shared Slavic heritage of these peoples in the context of growing Panslavism. Bulgaria especially was used for implementing Russian interests in SEE (see the San Stefano Treaty of 1878, later modified by the Berlin Treaty of 1878). This process also had an ecclesiastical dimension, exemplified in the creation of the Bulgarian Orthodox Exarchate in 1870, a unilateral step at the expense of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, which led to a long schism between the two churches.

These developments caused heated reactions on the part of Greek Orthodoxy, most notably by the Patriarchate of Constantinople (Gerd, 2014). The controversy pivoted on the clash between the Byzantine–Greek and the Slavic–Russian Orthodoxy regarding the leading role within the Orthodox world as a whole—a tension that continues today. These problems notwithstanding, there was an influential pro-Russian movement among Greek politicians and ecclesiastics in the nineteenth century, aimed at balancing the pro-Western orientations of the country. The same holds true *mutatis mutandis* until today, which attests to the overall significance of Russia in Southeast European affairs. A recent survey (Pew Research Center, 2017a) has shown that there are still widespread pro-Russian feelings at various levels of SEE, despite the fact that several states are members of the Western alliance and the European Union.

## Ethno-religious identities and the age of nationalism

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Although Christianity sought to transcend ethnic and other boundaries and create a universal community, it became strongly connected with the ethnic identities of various peoples, a fact that is as true in SEE as it is elsewhere. It was effected through the Christianization of Slavic peoples, which produced local amalgamations in terms of the ongoing vernacularization and indigenization of the new religion. This is the case for the Orthodox Romanians, Serbs and Bulgarians, as well as for the Catholic Croats and Slovenes (Petrović, 2014). The case of Greece is a particular: Christianity had a ‘Greek character’ in the East and used the Greek language as a vehicle of communication. This situation, however, both in Byzantium and later on, hardly signified identification with modern Greek identity. Historically, Hellenization was a non-national process; it was accomplished for different reasons, and pertained to other peoples in SEE. From the nineteenth century onwards, things changed: the need to create historical continuity in the frame of nation-building led to nationalist interpretations of the past, which led in turn to enhanced friction and conflicts among the peoples of SEE.



In the context of the politico-economic decline of the Ottoman Empire and the growing pressures to modernize from Western Europe, Ottoman subjects received greater rights for civic self-determination and autonomy. This led, however, not only to the political disintegration of the empire, but also to the rapid nationalization of ethno-religious identities. This resulted in the break-up of the Orthodox world at the expense of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and the creation of national Orthodox churches (Leustean, 2014). Historically, there were factors favouring this process, which can be equated with a 'confessionalization' of the Orthodox world; for example, the administrative pluralism in Eastern Orthodoxy and the particular connections between Christianization, indigenization, and ethno-genesis. Independent church structures had already been created by Bulgarians (first in 870) and Serbs (first in 1219) in an attempt to end Constantinople's religious control over them. Although later abolished and non-nationalistic in character, they remained alive in the memory of the respective peoples and were reinterpreted in a more nationalistic sense in modern times when these churches broke away from Constantinople definitively.

p. 722 Thus, the Serbian Orthodox Church received autonomous status in 1831 following the creation of an autonomous Serbian state, autocephaly in 1879, and the status of a Patriarchate in 1920. The autocephalous Greek Orthodox Church was created unilaterally through a schism in 1833, but was recognized in 1850 by Constantinople. The subsequent territorial expansion of the Greek state created jurisdictional problems with Constantinople, causing tensions that last until today. The Romanian Orthodox Church was declared independent from Constantinople in 1865 and received recognition in 1885; it was elevated to a Patriarchate in 1925. More conflictual was the case of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, founded unilaterally in 1870 as an autonomous Exarchate prior to the foundation of independent Bulgaria in 1878. It was recognized by Constantinople only in 1945 and was elevated to a Patriarchate in 1953. The Albanian Orthodox Church was proclaimed autocephalous in 1922 following the creation of independent Albania in 1912, and was recognized by Constantinople in 1937. There have also been attempts to create an autocephalous Macedonian Church (since 1967) and an autocephalous Montenegrin Church (since 1993), drawing again on historical precedents. Both of them exist *de facto* and enjoy the political support of the respective states, yet their church status remains uncanonical. Orthodox clerics and actors have played seminal roles in this process, such as Theoklitos Pharmakides (1784–1860) for the Greeks, Paisii Chiladarskii (1722–73) for the Bulgarians, and Dositej Obradović (1739–1811) for the Serbs (Jakir and Trogrlić, 2014)—a further factor in the powerful links between Orthodoxy and modern national identities in SEE.

The pervasive nationalization process also affected other religious communities in the Balkans, such as the Catholic Croats and Slovenes. Although the Roman Catholic Church is a transnational institution, on a local level there is a strong connection between religious and national identity. Catholics in SEE were distinguished by their higher levels of education, where both priests and monastic orders played a seminal role not only in education and pastoral care, but also in fostering national emancipation. The Croatian bishop and politician Josip Juraj Strossmayer (1815–1905) provides an excellent example in the context of the Habsburg Monarchy. A similar role in promoting national emancipation can also be observed among Uniate Christians (by Bishop Inocențiu Micu-Klein, 1692–1768, in Transylvania). Overall, the dissolution of the multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian Empire was instrumental not only for the political, but also for the religious rearrangement of SEE, especially through the creation of two large states—the Kingdom of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs on the one hand, and Romania on the other—which remained both religiously and ethnically heterogeneous. This resulted in the perpetuation of conflict zones among such communities, hindering the full integration and consolidation of the new states, and occasionally triggering serious confrontations. In the inter-war period in Romania, Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu (1899–1938) founded the extreme right movement 'Legion of the Archangel Michael' in 1927, and the nationalist and anti-Semitic 'Iron Guard' in 1930, which sought to homogenize the country and turned against non-Orthodox Romanian citizens. The same holds true for Ante Pavelić (1889–1959), the leader of the fascist Ustashe 'Independent

State of Croatia', who mobilized Catholicism against other ethno-religious groups, namely Serbs and Jews (Dinu, 2013).

Interestingly, this nationalization process also pertained to the Muslims in SEE, who were influenced at first by mounting Turkish nationalism in the context of the declining Ottoman Empire. Whereas Bosnian Muslims used to be defined solely through their religious identity, a modern Bosnian national identity appeared in 1995 following the creation of an independent Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the Albanian case, although religious polarization had historically remained rather constrained, there is growing evidence of increased nationalization. The current vision of creating a 'Great Albania' ↳ incorporating Albanian populations from various neighbouring countries (Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Greece) could become a source of conflict in the future.

In short, SEE is characterized by the opposite of 'believing without belonging', which is more typical of Western religious development, and indicates a distancing from institutional forms of religion. SEE is about 'belonging without believing', namely a strong connection with ethno-religious identity even among non-practising or irreligious people. In this context, one-sided victim discourses often shape the perceptions of the various ethno-religious groups in the light of their turbulent past. In recent decades, though, there have been systematic attempts at reconciliation (through the rewriting of history books, for example) and at promoting inter-religious dialogue and multiculturalism. That said, deep differences in national identification and religion between East and West in Europe still prevail (Pew Research Center, 2017a, 2017b).

## The communist period and its impact

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The communist period after the Second World War was a turning point in the modern history of SEE, including in the religious realm. Four countries (Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Albania) experienced communism in different ways: the first two remained dependent politically and culturally on the Soviet model of Marxism-Leninism; Yugoslavia followed an independent, non-aligned policy and applied a more 'liberal' version of socialism; Albania was gradually drawn into almost total isolationism. All communist regimes, however, followed a clear anti-religious policy and enforced numerous discriminatory measures against religious communities. In some cases, communist regimes tried to create their own 'political religions', namely all-encompassing ideological systems, in an attempt to render conventional religions obsolete and to replace them in the long run.

This anti-religious agenda was applied in different forms. In Albania, atheism was constitutionally established in 1967 in a radical form with a total prohibition of religion, leading to the physical extermination of any religious presence in the country. In other cases, there was usually a pragmatic compromise between churches and political regimes (for example, the related policies of Patriarchs German of Serbia, 1958-90, and Justinian of Romania, 1948-77). At the same time, the predominant Christian churches (mostly the Orthodox) were instrumentalized by the communist regimes for various goals (notably peace and disarmament initiatives in the 1980s). Within this 'marriage of convenience', Christian churches were also given some rights to develop their activities (ecumenical ones in Romania). There were even attempts to blend communist social policy with the churches' approaches to diakonia (note, for example, the Romanian Orthodox concept of the 'social apostolate'). In other cases, however, churches faced greater discrimination. The latter includes the Uniates in Romania, who were banned in 1948 following a similar decision in the Soviet Union by Josef Stalin (Leustean, ↳ 2010). Other religious communities (for example, the Muslims in Bulgaria) also faced oppression, a fact that led to their migration (mostly to Turkey). Younger generations raised in communism became secularized and increasingly indifferent to religion, mainly under the influence of state doctrine and propaganda.

The general lack of Orthodox opposition to communist regimes and its somewhat submissive cooperation with them were criticized as foreign to the prophetic Christian message—especially by those Orthodox who had emigrated to the West. Resistance was greater among Catholics (in Croatia among priests, monks, and nuns). However, there were minor forms of Orthodox resistance, such as the ‘Bogomoljci’ movement in Yugoslavia, under the influence of Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović; or the monastic ‘Burning Bush of the Mother of God’ (*Rugul aprins*) movement after the Second World War in Romania. Very interesting is the situation of religious communities in Yugoslavia. There was, first, a stronger ‘backing’ for the Serbian Orthodox Church compared with the other churches under the regime of Josip Broz Tito (1892–1980) (Buchenau, 2004). This preference was in many respects detrimental to the interests of the Catholics, who tried to maintain their coherence and their contacts with the broader Catholic world (for example, through the education of their priests in Rome). More generally, Catholics under communism were late in endorsing the innovative spirit unleashed by the Second Vatican Council (1962–5) and in coming to terms with modernity. In the province of Kosovo, there was a majority of Albanian Muslims, who had enjoyed political autonomy since 1945, but were later discriminated against by the communist regime. These were mostly non-practising Muslims; their Islamic identification was aimed more at their demarcation from the Serbs. Inter-ethnic tensions between the two grew stronger from the early 1980s onwards.

Other SEE countries, such as Greece, were never under communist rule and remained part of the Western alliance during the Cold War. The Orthodox Church also played a role in the anti-communist propaganda (during the Civil War of 1946–9, and later) and was seen as a protector of Greek national interests against a potential capitulation to communism. The Patriarchate of Constantinople was strongly backed by the USA in order to counterbalance the claims of the Moscow Patriarchate to lead the Orthodox world. Despite tensions among the Orthodox actors (for instance, between Slavic and Greek monks on Mount Athos), there were signs of a more fruitful interaction. Several Serbian theologians, especially students of priest-monk Justin Popović (1894–1979), studied theology in Greece—as against the older and dominant tradition of studying in Slavic countries, mostly in Russia (Buchenau, 2011).

## The post-communist situation

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In the wake of the radical events of 1989 to 1991 that led to the collapse of communist regimes across Eastern Europe in general, and after decades of repression, religion returned once again to the public sphere. This, in short, was a period of religious liberalization, in which religious communities (especially the established churches) raised a variety of claims: to reverse the church–state separation; to initiate the restitution of religious property confiscated by communist authorities or other collaborating actors; to restore churches, monasteries and mosques or to construct new and impressive ones (for example, the Cathedral of the Salvation of the Nation in Bucharest); to develop charitable and philanthropic activities; to introduce religious (usually confessional) education in public schools; to modernize religious media and communication structures; to ratify new laws supporting religious freedom, pluralism, and peaceful religious coexistence; and to canonize the ‘new martyrs’ who had been persecuted under communism. Overall opinion polls show higher rates of religious identification and regular religious practice than in Western Europe (Pew Research Center, 2017a). Thus, there is certainly a revitalization of religion in the region; at the same time, however, some societies undoubtedly secularized themselves further, albeit in ways rather different to those experienced under communism.

A revival of Orthodoxy can also be observed in Greece, largely because the collapse of communism brought the Orthodox links among the various peoples in Eastern Europe closer to surface. Despite its alliance with the West, Greece actively supported the Serbian cause during the Yugoslav Wars, not least because of their shared religion. Greece’s historical Orthodox sites (notably Mount Athos) also became desirable places of pilgrimage from all over Eastern Europe, a fact that contributed to organized religious tourism. Indeed,

Greece has never been a fully Western country; its views on religion, national identity and minorities are noticeably closer to those of Eastern Europe than those in the West (Pew Research Center, 2018b).

The resurgence of religion in post-communist contexts took various forms, not all of them positive. Most conspicuous was their role during the Yugoslav Wars, in which all three major religions were instrumental in exacerbating the conflict. In Bulgaria, the close collaboration between the Orthodox Church and the communist regime led to the emergence of internal church opposition, which resulted in the creation of a separate ecclesiastical structure (Alternative Synod) under Patriarch Pimen (1992–9), and to a schism in 1996. Despite the still-existing religious nationalisms, it is also worth mentioning that an ethnic Greek, Anastasios Yannoulatos (b. 1929), was elected Archbishop of Tirana, Dürres, and all Albania in 1992, and succeeded in reorganizing this heavily afflicted church. He was officially awarded Albanian citizenship by President Ilir Meta in 2017. Also important were various jurisdictional problems among competing Orthodox churches: those of the Serbian Orthodox Church with the non-canonical Macedonian and Montenegrin Orthodox churches; those between the Patriarchates of Bucharest and Moscow over the church status of the ex-Soviet Republic of Moldova (Bessarabia); and those between the Greek Orthodox Church and the Patriarchate of Constantinople, two churches that are ethnically almost identical.

p. 726

One major challenge faced all the Orthodox churches in SEE during this period. This was their encounter with the liberal and secular global environment, which they considered both dangerous and adulterating. This led to conservative reactions in addressing the challenges of Western modernity (for example, the concept of individual human rights or issues of religious freedom and pluralism) (Makrides, Wasmuth, and Kube, 2016). Consequently, tensions often appeared when Western Christian missionaries considered the ex-communist countries as fertile ground for evangelization. Similarly, conservative trends can be observed among Muslim communities. Even the moderate Albanian Muslims have joined the Islamic Council and feel at times closer to the Arab states. Muslims in Bulgaria have also asserted anew their particular identity by using their Muslim names and having their property restored. Furthermore, the Catholics are not totally identified with their counterparts in the West, but exhibit local characteristics, not least out of respect for national sensitivities (Croatia offers a good example). In the case of Judaism, and despite mounting anti-Semitism, attempts have been made towards a revitalization of communities that had existed historically in SEE or that are close to dying out, as well as in keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive—the Holocaust Memorial Center for the Jews of North Macedonia was officially opened in Skopje in 2011.

## The alterity of Southeast Europe, modernization, and religion

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All the topics discussed in this chapter relate to a broader feature of SEE—namely its distinctive development in comparison with Western Europe. This in turn has given rise to large numbers of studies and to negative characterizations of SEE as an underdeveloped, primitive, violent, irrational, or un-modern part of the continent, especially with regard to the ideology of ‘Balkanism’ (Todorova, 1997). The East–West differences, already perceived in the Middle Ages, led to the construction of mutually negative stereotypes. Ottoman rule over SEE and its subsequent seclusion from the breakthrough of West European modernity resulted in a huge gap between East and West. The latter started to look down on the former, while becoming with the passing of time its role model. Historically speaking, the issue of modernization of SEE, often identified with its Westernization, was deemed by many to be absolutely necessary. However, strong anti-Western sentiments and actions were always present, expressed by a variety of actors, including religious (especially Orthodox) ones. These also included alternative and indigenous modernization programmes as a means to avoid Western-led modernization. The result was a perpetual love–hate relationship towards the West and tenacious conflicts between pro- and anti-Western currents.

How does religion relate to the modernization of SEE? Countries with a Roman Catholic majority were generally thought to be more productive, more rationalized, and better governed than those with an Orthodox or a Muslim majority. During the Yugoslav Wars, the stereotype about industrious Catholic Slovenes and Croats in contrast to the less modern Orthodox Serbs and Bosnian Muslims circulated widely in international, mostly Western, media. Furthermore, the deep economic crisis that from 2009 onwards has afflicted Greece (since 1981 a predominantly Orthodox Member State of the European Union), was adduced as evidence of the intrinsic difficulties that such countries face towards modernization. Yet, without denying such East–West differences, it is wrong to attribute the underdevelopment of SEE to religious factors alone and to ignore many other parameters. In the sphere of economy, for instance, the many and successful economic activities of the Orthodox churches should not be overlooked (Makrides and Seraïdari, 2019). The evidence is necessarily mixed. The fact that SEE experienced modernity (notably the Enlightenment) as an exogenous phenomenon stemming from Western Europe reveals from the very beginning the difficulties in fully embracing its ideals and goes some way to explain the existing gap between East and West (Kitromilides, 2016). Conversely, the fact that several countries from SEE are Member States of the European Union and comply with European norms shows that a greater East–West convergence is not illusory. Recent perspectives from post-modern and post-colonial studies (for example, the ‘multiple modernities’ paradigm) are also critical of Western stereotypes about SEE and have shown the danger of essentialist judgements about its history and future course.

## Conclusion

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The ongoing process of European integration with regard to SEE is still under way. It does not only back regional cooperation and reconciliation, as in Bosnia–Herzegovina, or between Serbia and Kosovo, or indeed between Greece and North Macedonia following the bilateral Prespa agreement of 2018 that terminated the long dispute between the two countries over the name of the latter. It also sets the path for further developments in the religious sphere; for example, in terms of accepting diversity and plurality or of endorsing the greater religious neutrality of the state, despite the negative reactions (for instance, the ID cards conflict between church and state in Greece in 2000). The presence of numerous immigrants from SEE in Western Europe in recent decades (among others, Orthodox Romanians in Italy) will also have a long-term impact upon such changes. This is about transnational communities lying between the motherland and the host country, thus enabling mutual interactions at many levels.

Such developments, however, hardly signify complete uniformity of the European continent, either in religious or in other terms. Regional differences do exist, are still visible in various polls, and will continue to play a role. While Central and West European countries have experienced a decline in church membership and church attendance or in the belief in God, some countries from SEE are among the most religious in the continent (Pew Research Center, 2018c). Despite these differences, SEE should not be regarded religiously as an exception from standard rules or as a special case. Like any other region in Europe, it exhibits its own characteristic features that distinguish it, both historically and now, and leave their mark in the plural religious landscape of twenty-first-century Europe.

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### CHAPTER

## 42 Spain and Portugal

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### Abstract

The modern religious history of Spain and Portugal begins with the religious unity between the state and society forged around Catholicism, and ends with the present era epitomized by ongoing secularization and incipient religious pluralism. With some difficulty, the Catholic Church adapted to the trials posed by nineteenth-century liberalism, reaching an accommodation with the constitutional monarchies in both Iberian countries. The first serious challenge came with the arrival of the republics in Portugal in 1910 and in Spain in 1931. The republics did not last long, however; two Catholic dictatorships governed the fate of the Peninsula until the 1970s, though separation of church and state was formally maintained in Portugal. The dictatorships ended in 1974 and 1975, respectively, giving way to the establishment of new democracies, accompanied on the one hand by secularization in both the state and society, and on the other by growing religious pluralism.

**Keywords:** Spain, Portugal, modern religious history, church–state relations, secularization, religious pluralism, Catholicism

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SPAIN and Portugal share more than the Iberian Peninsula. They also share a history that is more similar than that suggested by the mutual lack of attention between both the societies themselves and their associated historiographies. The similarity, moreover, very visibly extends to religion. This is not, of course, absolute; when Portugal became politically independent in 1139, it marked the beginning of the country's distinctive trajectory, interrupted only by the incorporation of the Kingdom of Portugal into the Hispanic monarchy between 1580 and 1640. That said, the differences between the two nations have never been greater than the similarities, and very largely relate to questions of degree, form, or chronology rather than to historical experiences as such.

This chapter sets out the religious histories of Spain and Portugal, paying particular attention to the paths taken by the two nations between the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries. This history has evolved from a past in which both countries were almost universally Catholic to a present in which both political and social secularization and growing religious pluralization coexist with a deep-rooted and continuing Catholic

tradition. Of necessity, the narrative will be cursory, but it will provide factual and bibliographical indications that, on the one hand, make it possible to compare the historical experience of the Iberian Peninsula with the rest of Europe and, on the other, give the reader a starting point from which to delve more deeply into the past and present of both countries.

## Religious unity in the making

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Like many other European nations, Spain and Portugal were established as states during the early modern period, using religious unity as the cement for political unity. In both countries, the religion that played the unifying role was, of course, Roman Catholicism. Admittedly, Portugal had other materials with which to construct a national identity, given its greater linguistic and cultural uniformity. Spain's political unity, in contrast, emerged from a diversity of kingdoms and territories, each with their own languages and cultural traditions as well as their own institutional and administrative structures. In the Spanish case, therefore, Catholicism appeared to have an even more important role than in Portugal as the guarantor of political unity. In the late fifteenth century, the Crowns of Castile and Aragon united—Navarre would be incorporated into the Castilian Crown in the early sixteenth century—as a consequence of the marriage between Isabella I of Castile (r. 1474–1504) and Ferdinand II of Aragon (r. 1479–1516), who in 1496 would come to be known as the Catholic Monarchs. This title 'Catholic Monarch' was then retained by their successors. Significantly, and lacking a better name, the vast aggregation of European, American, and Asian territories governed by the various Spanish kings between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries was known simply as 'the Catholic Monarchy'.

However, in the Iberian Peninsula of the Middle Ages, Christians, Jews, and Muslims lived alongside each other, both in al-Andalus—the peninsular territory under Arab rule after 711—and in the Christian kingdoms of the north, which gradually extended their area of influence during the long process of so-called *Reconquista*. While this process of conquest came to an end in Portugal in 1249, Castile did not follow suit until 1492. Coexistence among faiths deteriorated during the late Middle Ages until any form of religious tolerance vanished completely in the early modern period. Many Muslims left the Christian kingdoms from the thirteenth century onwards, while social pressures increased on the Jews, many of whom converted to Christianity. To monitor the sincerity of the *conversos*, the Inquisition was established in Spain in 1478 and in Portugal in 1536, maintaining a presence in both countries until the early nineteenth century (Marcocci and Paiva, 2013; Kamen, 2014). Soon, the oversight of the 'Holy Office' extended to all types of heterodoxy, notably the persecution of the Protestant Reformation, which was not allowed to take root in peninsular soil. Even before the suppression of Protestantism, the Jews had been expelled from Spain in 1492 and Portugal in 1496—in the latter case along with the Muslims—and the exercise of the Islamic faith was prohibited in Castile in 1502 and in Aragon in 1526. One consequence of these provisions was a new wave of conversions to Christianity among the Jews and Muslims who refused to leave the Peninsula. Muslim converts were called *Moriscos* and continued living in Spain until they were expelled between 1609 and 1613 (Harvey, 2005). The religious unity of Iberian societies around the Catholic faith and the identity that fused their respective monarchies with the Catholic Church was, thus, completed by the early seventeenth century.

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The eighteenth century witnessed the first, modest jolts to the close alliance between throne and altar. In both Spain and Portugal, the civil authority tried to defend its prerogatives against the ecclesiastical power. In no way did this constitute the formulation of a secular state, but rather an affirmation of the state's capacity to act independently and intervene in church affairs in a system that came to be known as 'regalism'. One such regalist action was the decision made by Spanish King Charles III (r. 1759–88) to expel the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) from his kingdom in 1767 (Callahan, 1984: 29–31). However, the most genuine representative of Iberian regalism was the Portuguese Marquis of Pombal (1699–1782),

secretary of state to King Joseph I (the Reformer) (r. 1750–77). Pombal, the model of an enlightened despot, subjugated and reformed the Inquisition, expelled the Jesuits in 1759, and broke off diplomatic relations with the Holy See in 1760. His reforms, however, did not last long (Paiva, 2000: 171–6).

## Catholic Church and liberal state: between conflict and convergence

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At the end of the ‘Old Regime’, Catholicism in the Iberian Peninsula provided the primary frame of reference within which the daily life of individuals and society as a whole took place. The Catholic Church was a powerful institution. Its power came from its material wealth, its association with the monarchy, its control of thought and customs, the number of clergy, the dense network of its institutions, and its huge spiritual influence. In the early nineteenth century, Catholicism was omnipresent in Spain and Portugal. The urban and rural landscapes were dominated by religious symbols and buildings. Catholic rites marked the important moments of personal, family, and community life. The unanimity around Catholicism, however, was seriously threatened for the first time by the nineteenth-century liberal revolutions in a context of rapid social change and an increasingly conflictual relationship between liberalism and the Church (Callahan, 1984; Ferreira, 2002a; Alonso, 2014; La Parra, 2014, 2017; Suárez Cortina, 2014: 33–71).

Spain produced its first liberal constitution in 1812. However, despite its undeniable progressivism, the constitution retained the Catholic Church as the country’s established church, with absolute intolerance for any other religion. The liberal legislators found it natural that the sovereignty hitherto vested in the Catholic king be transferred to the Catholic nation as a new political subject (Portillo, 2007). Paradoxically, however, the same article that sanctioned religious intolerance attributed the duty to protect Catholicism to the state. In other words, and following the regalist tradition, it recognized the right of the civil authority to intervene in the affairs of the Church in order to reform it.

Church reform involved changes to its organization and the way the Church related to the civil authorities who were, in fact, seeking to construct a separate religious sphere subject to the interests of the state. Thus, Spanish liberals promoted a series of measures that were developed in the revolutionary periods of 1810–14, 1820–3, and 1836–43. These measures included freedom of the press with the possibility of publishing anticlerical criticism, the end of the Inquisition, the expulsion of the Jesuits, the suppression of male religious communities, the abolition of tithing and first fruit offerings, and the confiscation of the goods of the clergy. At the same time, between 1833 and 1839, a civil war took place that pitted the absolutists, or Carlists, against the liberals, with many church members supporting the former. In the words of historian William Callahan (1984: 14), the measures outlined above resulted in ‘the destruction of the Old Regime Church’.

Using the less conclusive term ‘destructuration’, Vítor Neto (1998: 46) describes the consequences for the Catholic Church of the actions carried out by Portuguese liberals, particularly from 1820 to 1823 and 1832 to 1834. These measures were similar to those adopted by the Spanish liberals during the same period: the recognition of civil and political freedoms, the abolition of the Inquisition, the dissolution of religious congregations, the elimination of tithing and the expropriation of church goods. As in its neighbouring country, these measures did not mean that Catholicism was no longer the established religion in Portugal; rather this was confirmed in the 1822 constitution, but with one important difference from the 1812 Spanish constitution: foreigners were allowed to practise other religions in private. This tolerance would not be granted in Spain until 1837. Additionally, in Portugal as in Spain, a civil war was fought between 1832 and 1834, which pitted absolutists, or Miguelists in this case, against liberals, with broad church support, once again, for the former side.

In both peninsular civil wars, the liberals triumphed. However, both countries would end up imposing a moderate version of liberalism around 1850 that sought to reach an agreement with the Catholic Church.

The Church, in turn, accepted the offer of a compromise and began a process of accommodating the liberal state that would bear fruit for the ecclesiastical institution throughout the second half of the nineteenth century (Callahan, 1984: 248–7, 2000: 20–56; Lannon, 1987: 119–45; Neto, 1998; Ferreira, 2002b; Alonso, 2014). A palpable sign of this new climate were the concordats signed between the Holy See and Portugal in 1848 and 1886 and with Spain in 1851. However, the respective *ralliement* processes did not always go smoothly for the Catholic Church, especially in Spain during the so-called Revolutionary Sexennium (1868–74). At the beginning of that phase, a new 1869 constitution was approved that recognized freedom of religion for the first time. Towards the end of the period, in 1873, a republic was proclaimed whose planned constitution envisaged the separation of church and state, an ideal that would always form part of the ideology of peninsular republicanism but would not become a legal reality until the twentieth century.

Whatever the case, in the second half of the nineteenth century, both Spain and Portugal witnessed the restoration of the strength of the Catholic Church, coinciding with the religious revival occurring in many other European countries at the same time (Neto, 1998: 401–94; Callahan, 2000: 107–48, 169–273; Clemente, 2002; Montero, 2017). The number of clergy increased in both countries, especially the religious orders, which had practically died out—particularly the male contingent—during the liberal revolution. The ability of both old and new religious congregations to recover and grow was astonishing, perhaps more so in Spain than in Portugal. In this environment, the activities of the male and female members of religious congregations was remarkable, above all in three areas: education, generally provided by the orders in their own schools; charity, practised above all by nuns in their own institutions or in public establishments; and missions to America, Africa, and Asia. Here, the Portuguese missionaries were particularly notable, as their country, unlike Spain, had succeeded in maintaining a vast colonial empire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The vitality of Iberian Catholicism in the second half of the nineteenth century, however, was not only seen in its clergy, but also among the faithful as a whole. The population's religiosity was nourished by the wealth of its popular traditions, as well as by new devotions. At the same time, these years witnessed the emergence of association-building among lay Catholics for devotional, social, apostolic, propagandistic, and political purposes. And in Spain, the incipient Catalan and, even more, Basque nationalist movements were deeply imbued with an ardent Catholicism. Both in Portugal after 1871 and in Spain after 1889, lay Catholics met regularly at national Catholic conferences. In the twentieth century, this movement would result in the organization of Catholic Action in both countries. The public presence of this modern Catholicism was completed by a proliferation of Catholic publishing houses and journals.

## The first secular challenge

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Parallel to the Catholic revival and much as in other European countries—France in particular, but also Italy and Belgium—a powerful anticlerical movement was growing in both Spain and Portugal connected, above all, to republicanism and the forces of the working-class left (Neto, 1998: 297–361; de la Cueva, 2003; Carvalho, 2017; Salomón Chéliz, 2017). Indeed, anticlericalism was becoming an essential part of the political culture and discourse of the Iberian left. On the one hand, anticlerical forces decried the excessive influence of the Catholic Church on the state and population, a circumstance that was considered the main reason for the backwardness of Iberian societies. And on the other, they proposed that the civil authorities should control the activities of the clergy more closely, particularly those with ties to religious congregations, and that clear advances should be made towards the separation of church and state. The Spanish and Portuguese anticlerical forces intensified their activity in the first decade of the twentieth century, with protests proliferating in both countries, and political meetings and demonstrations multiplying. In some cases, the mobilization resulted in violent incidents, the most serious of which was the so-called Tragic Week in Barcelona in July 1909, during which more than eighty religious buildings were burned. In the midst of the protests, the liberal governors in both countries undertook secularizing initiatives. In 1910, the Spanish government of José Canalejas (1910–12) backed a new Law of Associations to check the proliferation of religious communities. And in the same year, the Portuguese Prime Minister António Teixeira de Sousa (1910) presented a draft law to shut down Jesuit communities. The outbreak of revolution in Portugal later that year put an end to this and other measures under the constitutional monarchy.

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The October 1910 revolution brought a republic to Portugal and the Republicans entered power with an intense desire to secularize the state and society, following the example of the 1905 French Law on the Separation of the Churches and the State (Moura, 2010; Matos, 2011). The proclamation of the Portuguese Republic was accompanied by a violent anticlerical mobilization in parts of the country and the adoption of the first secularizing measures by the new authorities, primarily involving the dissolution of religious congregations and the expulsion of the Jesuits. In April 1911, Minister of Justice Afonso Costa signed a law separating church and state that stated that Portugal had no established religion, nationalized ecclesiastical goods, and handed the administration of worship to associations made up of laypeople, while maintaining some regalist controls such as governmental authorization for certain church acts and the payment of state pensions to members of the clergy. The secular nature of the Portuguese state was enshrined in the republican constitution of that same year. The energetic Catholic reaction to what were considered persecutory measures was swift in coming, and President Sidónio Pais (1918) relaxed the law. Just one year earlier, the famous Marian apparitions at Fatima occurred, which intensified support for the Catholic cause. The reconciliation of church and state in Portugal was completed after the coup d'état that installed an authoritarian regime in 1926.

The separation of church and state reached Spain twenty years later than Portugal and was also the product of the proclamation of a republic. The tumultuous anticlerical mobilizations of the first decade of the century had ceased, despite an incipient process of secularization that continued in some sectors of the population, and the Church had confirmed its position of privilege and capacity to influence. Indeed, when King Alfonso XIII (r. 1902–31) consecrated the nation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in 1919, it was highly symbolic. Four years later, the dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera (1923–30) was established; he was the precursor to Francisco Franco in his support for a Catholic regime in Spain.

Primo de Rivera's regime fell in January 1930 and the Spanish Republic was proclaimed in April 1931. As in Portugal, the arrival of the Republic was greeted in the streets with anticlerical demonstrations. The most violent took place in May, when churches and convents were burned in various cities. Other episodes of anticlerical violence occurred during the so-called Revolution of October 1934, when revolutionaries killed

thirty-seven clergy, and in the spring of 1936—a period of intense political brutality—during which numerous church properties were damaged (Álvarez Tardío and Villa García, 2013).

Markedly more significant than this intense, but episodic, anticlerical violence were the legal changes that were made (de la Cueva, 1998, 2017; Callahan, 2000: 274–342; Álvarez Tardío, 2002). Spanish republicans, like their Portuguese counterparts, wanted to enact their secularization project in both the state and society through their control of the legislative apparatus. The provisional government of the Republic approved a number of measures, but the great transformation came with the Constitution of 1931. In it, church and state were separated, the Catholic Church was deprived of public financing, the Company of Jesus was dissolved, religious acts performed outside a church became subject to government permission, divorce was introduced, the entire educational system was forced to secularize, and a law prohibiting religious congregations from participating in education was announced. When the Law on Religious Confessions and Congregations was passed in 1933, Spain became one of the most secular states in the West. No wonder, then, that during the constitutional debate, Manuel Azaña, who would soon become prime minister (1931–3) and, later, president of the Spanish Republic (1936–9), announced, ‘Spain is no longer Catholic’. To demonstrate the falseness of this assertion, the Catholics organized their resistance to this secular assault. Their primary instrument was the creation of a large political, faith-based party: the Spanish Confederation of Autonomous Rights (*Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas*—CEDA), which won the general election in 1933, but lost in 1936.

Votes, however, would soon be replaced by weapons. The failed military coup of 18 July 1936 gave way to three years of bloody civil war that was, among other things, a ‘war of religion’ (de la Cueva, 1998, 2018a; Vincent, 2005, 2008; Thomas, 2013). In the republican zone, more than 6,700 members of the Catholic clergy were murdered during the first six months of fighting by the revolutionaries who had taken control of the territory. Churches and other religious buildings were also plundered, burned, or used for profane purposes, and many of the images they contained were destroyed or damaged. Except in the Basque Country, religious practice went underground in this zone until the end of the war. The secular utopia had been brutally and efficiently created. Meanwhile, in the nationalist zone, the war was defined as a crusade against the enemies of God and the fatherland. The nationalist cause received the collective and official support of the church hierarchy in the 1937 ‘Joint Letter of the Spanish Bishops to the Bishops of the Whole World Concerning the War in Spain’. When the war ended in April 1939, a Catholic state was established in Spain, in some ways like the one that already existed in Portugal. However, there were as many differences between the two as there were similarities.

## Catholic dictatorships

For almost forty years of the twentieth century, two dictatorial regimes coincided in the Iberian Peninsula: the Portuguese, led first by António de Oliveira Salazar (1932–68) until he retired, and then by Marcelo Caetano (1968–74) until he was overthrown; and the Spanish, led by General Francisco Franco (1936–75) until his death. Historians and political scientists have long debated the nature of the two dictatorships without arriving at a consensus. However, all agree about one particular aspect: both dictatorships used Catholicism as a fundamental element of their definition and legitimation.

The origins of the Salazar regime lay in the military coup of 1926 that established an authoritarian government in Portugal. The new regime was warmly received by the members of the Portuguese Catholic Centre, who were quick to participate in it. These Catholics included António de Oliveira Salazar, minister of finance for the dictatorship beginning in 1928, and prime minister and de facto dictator from 1932 to 1968 (da Cruz, 1998; Simpson, 2014). Salazar was a university professor and a close friend of Cardinal Manuel Gonçalves Cerejeira, Patriarch of Lisbon (1929–71), who exerted a constant influence on the dictator.



However, unlike the Franco dictatorship, the Portuguese *Estado Novo* was not an officially Catholic regime. The 1933 constitution maintained the formal separation of church and state, as Catholicism was not declared the state religion, and religious freedom was recognized. Later, in 1940, relations between the Catholic Church and the state were regulated by a concordat and a Missionary Agreement between the Holy See and the Portuguese Republic, both of which clearly favoured the interests of the Church. This has led historian Manuel Braga da Cruz to characterize church–state relations in the Portuguese regime as ‘concordat-based separation’ and the Salazar regime itself as ‘Catho-secularism’, in which ‘state secularism was associated with a dominant Catholic orientation, legal separation merged with a tight moral collaboration and the independence of the two powers coexisted with a mutual understanding in the pursuit of coinciding interests’ (da Cruz, 1998: 15). Whatever the case, the constitutional reform of 1951 reinforced the position of the Church in the regime by adding that the Catholic religion was ‘the religion of the Portuguese nation’.

In Spain, the dictatorship was a consequence of the victory of one side over another in a bloody civil war, a circumstance that may explain the differences in the church–state relations model, based in the Spanish case on the establishment of the Catholic religion as the national religion, with no concessions (Martín de Santaolalla, 2003; Berzal de la Rosa, 2017). The composition of the victorious side was heterogeneous, ranging from fascists to conservative monarchists, with Catholicism being an element shared by all, and one which clearly differentiated them from the secularism of the defeated side. National Catholicism (the union of state, nation, and Catholicism) thus became the basic minimum of the somewhat rudimentary official ideology of the Franco dictatorship. The new Franco state lacked a constitution to define a model for relations with religious confessions. Nonetheless, the Catholic character of the regime was made abundantly clear in the repeal of secular legislation approved by the Republic, in the concession of numerous prerogatives to the Catholic Church, and in the recognition of the official status of the Catholic religion in several of the Fundamental Laws of the Realm. This was also demonstrated by the integration of Catholics belonging to church organizations into the government and administration. These Catholics were largely affiliated with Catholic Action until 1957, at which time members of Opus Dei began to be progressively incorporated into the government. The Catholic legitimization of the regime found its corollary in the new concordat signed between Spain and the Holy See in 1953, which solemnly confirmed that Catholicism was the state’s religion in addition to the privileges of the Spanish Church. This concordat was modified for legal purposes only in 1967 when, at the behest of the Catholic Church, the Spanish state passed the Law on Religious Freedom, which extended the limits of tolerance towards non-Catholic religions. Four years later, in 1971, the Portuguese state passed its own Law on Religious Freedom, which went further than its Spanish counterpart.

p. 738 Both the Portuguese and Spanish Catholic churches tried to make the most of the protection provided by the respective dictatorships to restore their influence over society after the secularist challenges of the 1910s and 1930s, respectively (Callahan, 2000: 440–99; Fontes, 2002). The tools for this social reconquest were not new: increasing the number of clergy, monopolizing the education system, heightening the church presence in charitable institutions and the army, solidifying ownership of the media, organizing popular missions, and establishing an iron grip on morality. One final tool of this pastoral reconquest was Catholic Action, which became extraordinarily important during these years, especially through its specialized movements, designed to increase the presence of the Church among specific groups like young people and workers.

In the 1950s, the first signs of discord began to appear between Spanish and Portuguese Catholics and their respective dictatorships, especially among the laity, although in the Portuguese case, some members of the hierarchy—such as the bishop of Porto—also raised dissenting voices. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the distance between the Catholic Church and the Franco and Salazar regimes continued to grow (Almeida, 2008; Montero, 2009). This ‘uncoupling’, as the process has come to be called in Spain, corresponded to two

different dynamics that developed at first consecutively and then in parallel. The first was a dynamic from below, led by laypeople who formed part of the Catholic Action movements and who, from the starting point of a social engagement, often evolved towards political commitment in opposition to the dictatorships. Additionally, for the first time in both countries, a clear left-wing culture began to develop among these Catholics. The second dynamic corresponded to an initiative from above, inspired by the Holy See and transmitted to the respective episcopal hierarchies. After the Second Vatican Council, Rome did not want to bind the fate of the Catholic Church in the Iberian Peninsula to the two dictatorships. In the case of Portugal, there was the further factor of a disagreement between the Church and the dictatorship; the Vatican's position in support of decolonization processes clashed head-on with the Portuguese regime's resistance to abandoning their overseas possessions. At the same time, both Spanish and Portuguese societies were becoming more secular, a process that began to accelerate in the 1970s (de la Cueva, 2018b). The combination of the two factors—the uncoupling of the Church from the dictatorships and the secularization process—made it easier for the two countries to embark on the transition to democracy accompanied by a smooth transition in the religious domain.

## Democracy, secularization, and religious pluralism

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The transition from the respective dictatorships to democracy began almost simultaneously in the two Iberian nations: in Portugal, the so-called Carnation Revolution overthrew the authoritarian regime in April 1974, while in Spain, the Franco era died with the dictator in November 1975. The transition processes themselves differed, but both led quickly to the adoption of constitutionally democratic systems compatible with the parliamentary democracies in the rest of Western Europe. This compatibility was fully recognized when both countries acceded to the European Community in 1986.

p. 739 In Spain, relations between the Catholic Church and the state were regulated during the democratic transition—and, indeed, to the present day—by a series of agreements that replaced the 1953 concordat: a 1976 'basic agreement', in which King Juan Carlos I (r. 1975–2014) waived his right to participate in the appointment of bishops, and four 'partial agreements' in 1979, which regulated various specific questions, including religious education, guaranteeing that a course on Catholic religion would be taught in all primary and secondary schools. These partial agreements were negotiated at the same time as the Constitution of 1978 was being written. Article 16 of the constitution, which is still in effect today, guarantees the right to religious freedom and affirms that no religion has a state character, and that all religions exist within a framework of 'relations of cooperation with the Catholic Church and other confessions'. Thus, the constitution goes beyond tolerance to enter into a context of full religious freedom (Contreras Mazario, 2011; Díez de Velasco, 2018a). The constitutional provision for freedom of religion was implemented in the 1980 Organic Law on Religious Freedom and a series of complementary laws. Regarding 'relations of cooperation', apart from those already established with the Catholic Church in the agreements of 1979, further accords were signed in 1992 with the Evangelical, Jewish, and Muslim communities. Additionally, after the constitution was promulgated, a set of laws was passed that regulated a number of sensitive issues, especially with regard to family morality: the restoration of divorce (1981) and the decriminalization of abortion (1985).

A further — very delicate — question involved education, in particular the public financing of Catholic schools (so-called *colegios concertados* or public-private schools) and attempts to introduce a civic education programme, which was seen as state encroachment on the right of parents to educate their children according to their moral convictions. During the socialist government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (2004–11), church-state relations deteriorated in the midst of intense Catholic mobilization. The reasons for this were the legalization of same-sex marriage (2005), the inclusion of a citizenship education course in the school curriculum (2006), and the passage of a new, more permissive law on abortion (2010)



(Alonso, 2012). The electoral success of the conservative People's Party in 2011, followed by the election of Pope Francis to head the Catholic Church in 2013, and changes in the ecclesiastical hierarchy helped to ease the tension, but the laws on same-sex marriage and abortion were not repealed. An additional, and longstanding problem, the financing of the Catholic Church, was resolved in 2007, when the institution ceased to receive direct funds from the state and began to self-finance, collecting 0.7 per cent of the income tax from those taxpayers who marked the corresponding box on their tax return.

Portugal had already established that it had no state religion when the transition to democracy began. 'Freedom of conscience, religion and worship' and the separation between state and 'churches and other religious communities' were confirmed in Article 41 of the Constitution of 1976, still in force today. Unlike the Spanish constitution of 1978, the Portuguese constitution makes no mention of the Catholic Church or the establishment of cooperative relations between the state and the church or any other confessions.

p. 740 However, this did not stop the democratic state from maintaining its concordat-based regime with the Holy See, which was modified—and simultaneously confirmed—when a new concordat was signed in 2004. In fact, the constitutional right to religious freedom was not fully enacted until the approval of a new Law on Religious Freedom in 2001, which extended the rights recognized for Catholics in the concordat to other religions. With this law, minority religions were placed on an equal legal footing with Catholicism in Portugal. As in Spain, the law allowed for the possibility of agreements between the state and confessional communities, although none have been signed to date (Vilaça, 2006: 148–58). Again, as in Spain, laws have been passed in recent decades that affect religion to the extent that they pertain to family morality. In 1975, for example, couples married in the Catholic Church were allowed to divorce. In 1987, abortion was partially decriminalized, and was considerably expanded in 2007 after a second referendum on the issue (in an earlier referendum in 1998, the 'no' vote was dominant). In 2010, same-sex marriage was approved. Unlike in Spain, in Portugal these 'divisive issues' have not been 'the source of societal rifts', as the Catholic hierarchy has adopted a more conciliatory attitude than its Spanish counterpart, and the Catholic laity is less mobilized (Machado-Jorge, 2017: 153).

The political and legal secularization of the Spanish and Portuguese states occurred in the midst of a profound societal secularization (Vilaça, 2006; Monteiro, 2012; Pérez-Agote, 2012). As in other Western countries, secularization transformed the religious landscape in Iberia between the 1960s and the 1990s. The scope of what Alfonso Pérez-Agote has identified as the second wave of secularization was broad, to the point that both societies became markedly more secular, but the pace was more accelerated in Spain than in Portugal. Interestingly, the shift away from religion was not expressed in terms of opposition, but in a growing disinterest in terms of practice, rules and dogmas. This was very different from the first wave of secularization, identified with the anticlericalism of the early twentieth century.

Although sociological studies differ in their emphases, some significant data are available regarding the effects of secularization in both societies. For example, in 1965, 98 per cent of the Spanish population identified as 'Catholic' and 83 per cent—a number that is probably exaggerated—as 'practising Catholic'. In 1988, the percentages had decreased to 81 per cent and 41 per cent respectively. Finally, in 2008, the proportion of self-identifying 'Catholics' was 74 per cent, with the percentage of 'non-believers' and 'indifferent' increasing noticeably to 24 per cent. By this stage, self-identifying 'practising Catholics' constituted only 28 per cent of the population. This trend towards higher numbers of non-believers continues to grow and has become particularly marked among young Spaniards of whom, in 2010, only 51 per cent self-identified as 'Catholic' and only 10 per cent as 'practising Catholic', while 42 per cent self-identified as 'indifferent', 'agnostic', or 'atheist' (Pérez-Agote, 2012: 112–34). In Portugal the decline has been less steep, and the country has remained more actively Catholic than Spain thus far. The 1960 census registered 98 per cent 'Catholics', while in 1998, 90 per cent of Portuguese continued to identify as 'Catholics' and four years later, 55 per cent as 'practising Catholics' (Monteiro, 2012). In 2011 the number of

p. 741 'Catholics' decreased to 80 per cent, while 38 per cent self-identified as 'practising Catholics' (Teixeira,

2012: 4–5, 51). Both countries also witnessed a secularization of values, including among practising Catholics. That said, Catholicism continues to be a fundamental element in defining the cultures of both societies.

Starting in the 1990s, religious change in Spain and Portugal incorporated a further dimension that in many ways complemented secularization: the introduction of religious pluralism in the Iberian Peninsula (Vilaça, 2006; Teixeira, 2012; Díez de Velasco, 2018a, 2018b; Planet Contreras, 2018). Prior to that time, the presence of minority religions had been limited. Now, the new legal framework, but above all, the arrival of immigrants from Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Asia, has helped to fuel the growth of believers in religions other than Catholicism. This expansion of religious pluralism in Spain and Portugal has also been fed by the influx of tourists and a large number of ex-pats, many retired, living on the Mediterranean coasts and southern part of the Peninsula. It is difficult to provide solid and comparable data about religious membership in Spain and Portugal, but data from the Pew Research Center (2015) for 2010 provides some idea: that year, Spain was home to 980,000 Muslims (2.1 per cent of the population), 900,000 Orthodox Christians (2 per cent), and 460,000 Protestants (1 per cent), to cite the most important religious minorities, while Portugal had 160,000 Protestants (1.5 per cent of the population) but only 30,000 Muslims and 20,000 Orthodox Christians. One indication of the necessarily provisional nature of these data is the fact that—in the Spanish case—the Federation of Evangelical Religious Entities of Spain (FEREDE) claimed that in 2012 it had 1,200,000 members, while a 2017 study by the Union of Islamic Communities of Spain registered the presence of 1,946,300 Muslims in the country (Louzao, 2018: 135; Observatorio Andalusí, 2018: 9).

## Conclusion

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The religious history of Spain and Portugal follows a course from a past of religious unity between the state and society forged around Catholicism at the dawn of the modern period to a very different scenario at the beginning of the twenty-first century. With some difficulty, the Catholic Church succeeded in adapting to the trials posed by nineteenth-century liberalism, reaching an accommodation with the constitutional monarchies in both countries. The first serious challenge accompanied the arrival of the republics in Portugal in 1910 and then in Spain in 1931. This challenge did not last long, however; two Catholic dictatorships governed the fate of the Iberian Peninsula until the 1970s, although separation of church and state was formally maintained in Portugal. The dictatorships ended in 1974 and 1975, respectively, and the transition to democracy was accompanied by processes of secularization in both the state and society, as well as by growing religious pluralism.

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### CHAPTER

## 43 Turkey

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### Abstract

This chapter argues that the supposed binary of a secular state and popular Islam is inadequate as a tool of analysis if we are to understand how religion has become a prominent category of both privilege and exclusion in Turkish society. Specifically, it contends that successive Turkish governments have privileged Sunni Islam as national identity. To build this argument, the chapter follows two parallel threads. The first analyses the ethnic and religious homogenization of the national body with a particular emphasis on violence against non-Muslim and non-Sunni groups. The second shows how, within the larger historical context of modernization theory, Cold War politics, and the post-9/11 promotion of moderate Islam, successive Turkish governments worked towards maintaining Sunni Muslim privilege while continuously expanding the category of enemies of the Turkish nation.

**Keywords:** non-Muslim minorities, Muslim majority, Sunni privilege, religious violence, religious homogeneity, Cold War, secularism

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‘RELIGION’ is a complex term in Turkey, despite the fact that the Turkish state has long insisted that its citizens are religiously homogeneous. This understanding of religious homogeneity, however, obscures more than it reveals about the role that religion plays in Turkey. To begin with, census data do not exist for the exact numbers of non-Sunnis, non-Muslims, non-practising, or non-believers in the country; nor do they exist for the ethnic diversity within the Sunni population (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2019). In addition, the lack of official records hides the sharp decline in the numbers of non-Muslims to levels that threaten their survival, due very largely to state violence and the discriminatory citizenship regime.

The statistical claim of a homogeneous Sunni Muslim population remains, nonetheless, the basis of national identity politics. The Turkish citizenship regime purportedly guarantees equality for religious and ethnic minorities, but in reality it privileges Sunni Muslim identity. Turkey has, therefore, an exclusionary citizenship regime that rests on a majoritarian understanding of religious identity, privileging Sunni Islam as the basis of national unity.



The literature on Turkey also equates an historically and socially stable category of Sunni Islam with ‘religion’ and constructs this as the accepted lens through which to interrogate the subject. Thus, the analysis of religion and secularism in Turkey—namely the binary of elite secularism versus popular Islam that has wide purchase internationally—rests on the representation of the country as a Muslim majority state. And in taking Sunni Islam as their unit of analysis, this literature perpetuates a religious–secular divide that overlooks the privileged position of Sunni Islam for Turkish majoritarian nationalism.

This chapter calls into question the *problematic* of religious homogeneity as the accepted way of both governing and representing religion in Turkey. It argues that a ‘Sunni Muslim majority’ is not the natural state of the population in Turkey, but a political and legal construction as well as the accepted approach to religion in Turkey. To challenge these interrelated constructions, the chapter interrogates the complexity of what religion has come to mean in Turkey in relation to the larger context of a global ↪ politics of religion. To develop this argument, the chapter is divided into three sections and a short conclusion. The first section discusses the place of religion in the Ottoman Empire, with a special focus on the closing decades when religious identity became linked to notions of loyalty and citizenship. The second focuses on discussions of secularism and the Turkish nation-building process to trace the construction of a Muslim majority through policies of homogenization and exclusion. The third section analyses the debates surrounding a model of Muslim democracy. It focuses on the politics of religious freedom of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) era and looks at Turkey–EU relations through this lens.

## Religion in the Ottoman Empire

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### The *millet* system

Turkey is the official heir of the Ottoman Empire that ruled over a multi-ethnic and multi-religious population, covering a vast geographical expanse that spanned several continents. To understand how the current ethnic and religious composition of Turkey came into being, it is imperative to look at the state–religion relations in the empire, with a special focus on the nineteenth century.

The Ottoman Empire was indeed multi-religious and multi-ethnic and covered far-flung territories in the African, Asian, and European continents. The diverse Muslim population of the empire was regulated as the Muslim *ummah* (the Muslim nation), although the various provinces were under different administrative systems. The Ottoman state organized and taxed the non-Muslims of the empire by an administrative structure called the *millet* system. The *millets* were formed on the Porte’s (Sultan’s) declaration (*berat*). The highest religious leader of *millet* communities had responsibilities for church organization, educational, judicial, and civic matters, and the administration of charitable properties. The *millet* order, therefore, was not a minority recognition system in the modern sense, but an organizational structure for dealing with various non-Muslim communities within the Empire’s vast population (Karpat, 1972).

### The reform period

The heterogenic organizational structure of the *millets* started to become a problem in the nineteenth century with emerging national ideologies on the one hand and European colonialist expansion on the other. Faced with territorial disintegration and European intervention, Ottoman state authorities adopted Ottomanism (*Osmanlılık*) that aimed to replace traditional communal belongings of ethnicity and religion with the concept of equal citizenship. Ottomanism set out to achieve Westernized and ↪ modernized state–subject relations. Accordingly, important legal reforms aimed to establish a centralized state and a nation with uniform administrative, legal, and education systems.

The first attempt was the *Tanzimat Fermani* of 1839 that declared modernization to be the official policy of the Empire, and granted equality in conscription and taxation. A second edict, the *Islahat Fermani* of 1856, extended the concept of equality to 'equality before the law' and granted equality and unity among all Ottoman subjects, regardless of differences of faith, ethnicity, and language (Karpas, 1972).

The *Kanun-i Esasi* (1876), the first Ottoman Constitution, further strengthened the concept of 'national' unity as the official state discourse of Ottomanism. The Constitution also codified equality and unity as the absence of religious prejudice: 'All Ottomans are equal in the eyes of the law. They have the same rights, and owe the same duties towards their country, without prejudice to religion' (Article 17). Thus, the legal reform process embodied in the declaration of the first Constitution represents a struggle to shift communal belongings to an individual and equal citizenship regime. National unity and communal religious and ethnic identities became therefore opposing sources of loyalty, a tension that continues today.

Yet these efforts to prioritize territorial and national unity during the nineteenth century were not able to stop the territorial losses caused by the military defeats and ethno-nationalist movements. The failure of the equal citizenship ideal gave rise to an exclusionary approach to religion and ethnicity that led to a definition of the Ottoman state's identity along Islamic-Turkish lines. This and the subsequent emergence of Pan-Islamism and later Turkish nationalism would deepen this problem at the turn of the twentieth century.

## From empire to nation-state

In the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, religion became a problem of demographics and economics as well as sovereign power. Religious identity, therefore, gained a new importance as correlative with political loyalty. Under the autocratic reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II (r. 1876–1909) a new state ideology, Pan-Islamism, emerged with the aim of unifying the 'nation' along Sunni Muslim lines against separatist pressures. Islam was utilized as a vehicle to unite the Turkish, Kurdish, and Arab populations as one loyal majority. During this period the title of caliphate was reinstated for political purposes.

The issue of religious difference was entangled with the much-debated 'Eastern Question' (and therefore with the 'Armenian Question') and the rise of Turkish nationalism (Deringil, 2009). The Christian subjects of the empire (especially Armenians and Greek Orthodox) were caught between the Ottoman state's Pan-Islamist policies, and Russia's, Britain's, and France's colonial expansion over Ottoman-held territories. The protectionist claims of these states in favour of their co-religionists in the Empire contributed to the perception of the non-Muslim populations as disloyal 'fifth columns'. In the context of the Russo-Turkish Wars in the East, Armenians were seen as potential ↵ or active traitors aiming to have their own independent nation-state. As part of the nationalizing policies, irregular *Hamidiye* units of armed Kurds were formed in the Eastern provinces of the Empire. Armenian refusal to pay taxes to local Kurdish rulers led to what is known as the Hamidian Massacres of 1894–6 that claimed thousands of Armenian lives (Akçam, 2008).

The Committee of Union and Progress (*Ittihat ve Terakki Fikrasi*—CUP) replaced the Abdulhamid regime with a government coup in 1908. The Young Turk regime (1908–18) embraced a full-blown nationalist drive for ethnic and religious purity. To unify the nation along Sunni-Turkish lines, it adopted 'Turkish nationalism' as its official ideology (Kieser, 2013). This definition further limited the basis of the nation along Turkish-Sunni Muslim lines, which resulted in bloody solutions to the problem of religious and ethnic majority-minority demographics. In the immediate aftermath of the start of the CUP regime, local Muslims committed widespread pogroms in Adana, a southern province of the Empire in 1909, in which 20,000 Armenians were killed (Der Matossian, 2014).

Later, in the wider context of the First World War, the CUP put into effect two main homogenization policies —Turkification and Muslimization—to solve the ‘problem’ of the large non-Muslim, non-Turkish populations of the Empire (Dündar, 2001; Bayir, 2013). On the one hand, the CUP pursued policies aiming at the expulsion and annihilation of the non-Muslim population. The most drastic method to this end was the mass deportation and large-scale massacres that amounted to the Armenian Genocide of 1915 (Akçam, 2008). On the other, the government pursued wide-scale resettlement policies of Muslim immigrants from the former Ottoman territories, lost during war, to the Russian Empire and in the Balkans in order to secure the Empire’s shrinking territories (Altuğ, 1991). Finally, The CUP applied the method of ‘procuring’ Turkish and Muslim immigrants in order to increase the country’s Muslim population (Bayir, 2013: 60–1).

At the same time, both homogenization and Turkification policies were supported by a forceful economic nationalism that aimed to create a Sunni Muslim commercial bourgeoisie and landowners (Zürcher, 2000). This policy was achieved by continuous confiscation and redistribution of the property of non-Muslim subjects that had been virtually liquidated through war, population exchange, and massacre (Keyder, 1987; Der Matossian, 2014). These double policies of Turkification and Muslimization not only diminished the non-Sunni non-Turkish population considerably; they also created a ‘Sunni-Muslim majority’ as the backbone of the new Turkish nation.

## The Turkish republic and secularism

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The most common view on Turkish secularism, or *laiklik*, asserts a strict separation between religion and the state, and constraints on religion in the public sphere (Berkes, 1964; for a more nuanced view, see Davison, 2003). According to this analysis, at the centre of Turkish secularism—or laicism—was the non-religious state that brought religion under control by limiting its definition and practice. As such, the *laik* Turkish state was neither neutral nor objective when it comes to religion, but aimed to eliminate religious competition by controlling and banning the activities of alternative religious authorities such as an independent clerical elite (*ulema*) or local Islamic networks, namely Islamic brotherhoods (*tarikats*) (Yavuz, 2003).

However, this dominant separation thesis fails to explain how the Turkish State allowed and often encouraged Sunni Islam to achieve both statistical majority and national unity. This unity is achieved by privileging Sunni Muslim identity while simultaneously eliminating and discriminating against non-Muslim and non-Sunni groups.

The new republic was officially established in 1923 under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk after what is known in Turkish history as the ‘War of Independence’. During the foundational years of the republic, religion was invoked as the common denominator of the nation and being a Muslim was set as a precondition for nationality (Yıldız, 2001). The second Constitution of the Republic, adopted in 1924, included Islam as the official religion of the State. The Constitution was amended in 1928, removing the reference to Islam as the official State religion. Another amendment in 1937 further defined the Turkish state as *laik* (Bayir, 2013).

*Laiklik* was the central project of the Turkish modernization process in that it aimed to create modern citizens loyal to the new state. To this end, the Turkish State undertook secular reforms, such as the adoption of the Latin alphabet, Western attire, civil code, and a unified educational system. In the larger context of modernization theory, Turkish secularism promised that religion would lose its importance among the masses with secular reform and the advance of urbanization, education and economic development (Berkes, 1964). The rural and provincial population of the country, defined as backward, became the main target of political and social reforms of developmental modernization throughout the twentieth century (Lerner, 1958; Lewis, 2002).

The limits of modernizing state secularism were at their clearest in gender policies. While pursuing a policy of equal citizenship for women in the new republic—offering them education and equal rights before the law, political enfranchisement and access to higher education—the patriarchal nationalist discourse simultaneously controlled women’s activities and sexuality within the larger frameworks of family morality and national unity as ‘mothers of the nation and preservers of cultural identity’ (Kandiyoti, 1994: 378). The Kemalist discourse of women’s emancipation did not allow the operation of independent women’s organizations. Indeed in 1935, a year after women in Turkey gained the right to vote in national elections, the single-party regime of the Republican People’s Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*—CHP) closed all independent non-Muslim and Muslim women’s rights organizations that survived the violent end of the Ottoman Empire.

p. 751 While the modernization of the ‘backward sectors of society’ was modernist secularism’s dominant political discourse, de facto the religious and ethnic identity of the majority, namely Sunni Islam and Turkishness, were privileged as the defining characteristics of Turkish citizenship. This privileging was institutionalized through the circulation of an authorized discourse of Turkish Sunni Islam by a government agency: the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*, the Diyanet), established in 1924 by the same law that abolished the Caliphate. With the Diyanet a statist-national form of secularism came into being that authorized and disseminated majority privilege through religion and ethnic belonging. The Diyanet also played an important role in the establishment of state-controlled nationalist secularism.

Although the literature on Turkey discusses the fundamental role of the Diyanet in both the state control over Sunni Islam and its homogenization, and the restrictions imposed on heterodox religious institutions and practices (Gözyayın, 2009), the role that it plays in the dissemination of Sunni-Turkish privilege as part of national secular discourse has not so far been analysed. The Presidency supervises the administration and financing of registered mosques, the employment of the muftis, imams, and muezzins as civil servants, as well as issuing the Friday sermon to mosques throughout the country. In their capacity as civil servants, these clerics worked to disseminate ‘institutionally supported modes of majoritarian religious worship’ (Tambar, 2014: 104). At the same time, the Diyanet plays a vital role in the continuous marginalization of religious minorities. Religious minority faiths and practice, especially that of Alevis, were excluded from the permissible definitions of religion legitimated by the state. This last point turns our attention to the elimination of religious minorities as a parallel process to the homogenization of the Turkish nation for creating loyal citizens.

## Minorities under Turkish secularism

The period that started with the First World War and ended in the formation of the Turkish nation-state (1914–23) fundamentally transformed the multi-ethnic, multi-religious population of Anatolia. The demographics of the new republic were drastically different from the Ottoman Empire in terms of numbers. With several policies that targeted non-Muslims between 1912 and 1927—that is, between the start of the First World War and the fifth anniversary of the Republic—the non-Muslim population of Anatolia decreased from 20 to 3 per cent (Cagaptay, 2005). And despite the continuing presence of religious and ethnic minorities in the new republic, Turkey has no national laws in place to address minority rights.

Although official statistics inform us that these minorities make up less than 1 per cent of the Turkish population, reliable data on these groups are largely absent. The size of the main non-Muslim minorities—Armenians, Greek Orthodox, and Jews—is currently unknown. Numerous smaller groups—especially indigenous Eastern Christian communities such as Syriacs (Assyrians)—also exist, many of which are currently in danger of extinction. It is also unclear which groups are included in the minority category to justify the 1 per cent argument. For example, the number of Alevis, estimated between 15 and 25 per cent of the population at the turn of the millennium (Erdemir, 2005), are not included in the official statistics. In

addition, there are no accurate statistics for Kurdish citizens and their various religious and other subcategories: Sunni, Alevi, Caferi, Yezidi, and Zaza. The absence of these populations from national official statistics and the ambiguity of their legal status are of crucial importance for a discussion of how religion became a prominent category for both privilege and exclusion in the discourse of secular Turkish citizenship.

Legally, the ethnic and religious minority groups in Turkey can be categorized as recognized and non-recognized. The recognized category came into being with the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 that established the Republic of Turkey. The Treaty granted minority communities special self-governance rights based on religious difference. However, for the new Turkish Republic, minority rights were a contentious issue for national sovereignty and for the incessant homogenization and Turkification policies. As the Treaty did not specify which communities would benefit from legal recognition, the new Turkish State applied the terms of the treaty only to the Jewish, Armenian, and Greek Orthodox communities (Oran, 2007). In the absence of national laws that regulate the rights of religious minorities, in legal terms these communities were ruled as 'foreigners' protected by an international treaty. The legal status problem inevitably fuelled discrimination, and resulted in the exclusion of minorities from the nation. The Lausanne Treaty further contributed to the elimination of the non-Muslim population when it stipulated the religious minority exchange between Greece and Turkey (Iğsız, 2018).

As for the rest of the minority populations in the country, the largest of them being Alevis, Kurds, and Syriacs, the Treaty did not guarantee any rights. Both religious and ethnic differences within the majority were eradicated in national records as non-Sunni and non-Turkish populations were subsumed into the category of 'Muslim Turks'. Devoid of any recognition, the Alevi community, the largest non-Sunni group in the country, suffered from various assimilationist policies while being statistically included in the 'Muslim majority' (Bayir, 2013). The Kurdish minority was also subjected to forceful assimilation policies that inserted them into the 'Sunni majority'. Thus, the secular equal citizenship of the Turkish State denied any recognition of ethnic and sectarian differences within the 'Muslim majority', while at the same time excluding non-Muslims from the essentially 'Muslim' nation. In other words, Turkish equal citizenship practices made Muslim synonymous with Sunni-Turkish, creating 'the notion of a single homogeneous citizenry' (Tambar, 2014: 84).

The homogenization measures continued under the single-party regime of the Republican People's Party, that is, the secularist, nationalist, and etatist party founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. The CHP government also targeted non-Muslim, non-Turkish groups in several episodes of political violence and discrimination, such as the Trakya pogroms of Jews in 1934, the Dersim massacre of Alevi Kurds in 1939, the establishment of *Varlık Vergisi* (capital tax) targeting non-Muslims between November 1942 and March 1944, and the conscription of non-Muslim men into labour battalions claiming they were potential 'fifth column' and thus a liability in the approaching Second World War (Bali, 2005).

## Sunni Muslim privilege and the Cold War

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An important paradigm used to explain the social and political dynamics of religion in Turkish society became popular from the 1970s onward; this was based on Şerif Mardin's (1973) centre–periphery thesis on late Ottoman and early Kemalist efforts to strengthen the central state. This categorization was the inspiration for the mainstream approach to religion in Turkey that rested on an analytical duality between a Muslim majority public and a secular minority elite. These analyses argued that the fundamental conflict in Turkish society and politics is between a centralist state (the Kemalist secular elites of military, bureaucracy, and judiciary), and a periphery (the 'pious majority', consisting of local notables and peasantry). The centre was further defined by restrictive policies over Islamic practices in the public sphere (Göle, 1997), and the periphery by a dynamic political movement that finds its political representation in conservative and religious parties (Yavuz, 2003).

This binary analysis, however, disguised the extent to which Sunni Islam is 'implicitly and explicitly privileged and delineated a Muslim Turkish majority as the base of the nation-state' (Lord, 2018: 70). By analysing Islam as the culture and ethos of Turkish society, it simultaneously removed religious and ethnic difference from the sociological and political analysis of religion and secularism, thus obscuring the way in which Sunni Muslim privilege worked to exclude and eliminate religious and ethnic diversity.

Far from resting on a central state and Muslim periphery binary, the relationship between state and religion went through a series of transformations in response to global economic and political developments. Notably, with the beginning of the Cold War in 1945, the onset of the multi-party period, and Turkey joining NATO in 1952, Turkish State ideology promoted Islam as national culture against communism (Adalet, 2018). In addition, in the multi-party period, the CHP promoted Sunni Muslim identity to prepare for the upcoming elections for the transition to multi-party politics. To increase the party's popular base, the CHP government started to encourage religion within the educational system. In 1948, for example, it introduced religion into the school curriculum as an optional course. And in 1949, it permitted private Quranic courses, and passed a law allowing the opening of theology departments in higher education (Bayir, 2013: 114).

The Democratic Party (*Demokrat Parti*—DP), CHP's rival, came to power in 1950. The DP's populist policies aimed to secure a strong electoral basis by appealing to nationalist-religious values. The party's religious discourse was yet another façade for an economic nationalization policy that favoured the local Sunni Muslim landowners and small bourgeoisie. These policies provided an especially favourable political environment for religious brotherhoods to expand their activities and followers that effected Turkish politics in the following decades (Altınordu, 2010). Despite the accepted analysis of this period as a response to the 'people's religious needs' (Yavuz, 2019: 12) that had been suppressed by the secular top-down policies of the single-party era, DP policies in fact aimed at privileging Sunni Islam and its local social economic networks. And despite a growing freedom of religion rhetoric, state policies towards religious minorities remained as discriminatory as they were in the CHP era. The popular economic and nationalist policies of favouring local Sunni Muslims led in turn to communal violence that targeted non-Muslims, epitomized in the government-sanctioned anti-Greek (Istanbul) pogroms of 6–7 September 1955 when the houses and businesses of Greeks (also Jews and Armenians) were looted and destroyed.

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The DP rule ended in a military coup in 1960 that marked the start of the active dominance of the military in Turkish politics. While the military claimed to resecularize the public space, exclusion and persecution of non-Muslim and non-Sunni minorities did not differ from the previous periods. Anti-Muslim state policies such as expulsion of Greek Orthodox in 1964 shrank the size of the Greek community of Istanbul from 80,000 in 1955 to 48,000 in 1965. As the number of non-Muslim minorities subsequently dropped to insignificant figures in Turkey, sectarian violence from 1970s on targeted the largest non-Sunni group, the Alevi. In this decade, more than 200 Alevi were killed in the massacres of Maraş (1978) and Çorum (1980).

## The 'Turkish-Islamic synthesis' and Islamic mobilization

The military regime, established after the 1980 *coup d'état*, carried out the state programme of 'Turkish-Islamic synthesis' (*Türk-Islam sentezi*), that enforced the interpretation of Sunni Islam as national identity. This programme turned what had long been an official policy in terms of demographic engineering with the aim of 'generating a Muslim majority' (İğsız, 2018: 109) into an authoritarian state ideology of religion disseminated by state institutions in the private realms of culture and education. The Turkish-Islamic synthesis further endorsed a military enforced version of secularism and a controlled Islamization of Turkish society (Toprak, 1990). The military regime put a strong emphasis on Sunni Islam in order to impose social cohesion in the wider context of the struggle against communism and Islamist fundamentalism in conformity with US Cold War priorities (Tuğal, 2016; Adalet, 2018).

The 1982 Constitution written and enacted by the military regime and still in force, included references to Islam as a defining part of Turkish identity (Parla, 1995). The constitution also introduced religious instruction into the curricula of primary and secondary schools with content determined by the Ministry of National Education's Department of Religious Instruction. Information on other religions and sects, such as Alevism and Bektashism, was given from a Sunni Muslim perspective (Özgül, 2019). Between 1973 and 1999, subsequent governments built 29,848 new mosques, increasing the number of mosques in the country by 66 per cent (Gökaçtı, 2005); conversely the building of Alevi worship places (*cemevi*) or new churches was not allowed.

The Islamic movement in Turkey is not a uniform whole. Government policies in the decade following the military coup provided an especially favourable political environment encouraging the multiplication of Islamic movements and their sphere of activities (Tuğal, 2016). Religious orders and brotherhoods increased their activities in this period: setting up Qur'an courses, charity foundations, women's, youth, and mutual support associations, and student dormitories (Çakır, 1990). Islamism, that grew politically powerful as a tool in the opposition to communism and to the Soviet Union, began to form parties and take part in coalition governments from the 1970s onwards and run critical ministries such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Justice (Toprak, 1981).

### p. 755 Consolidation of the secular-Islamic divide

This promotion of Islamism allowed Islamic groups to expand their activities and followers. It eventually resulted in increasingly severe attempts by the Turkish military to curb the influence of the Islamist groups. The field of education became an even more contested space in this struggle. In 1982, the military regime implemented a dress code that banned headscarves (and religious wear in general) from state institutions for civil servants, and also limited the access of women wearing Islamic clothing to higher education and government jobs. This policy elicited mass demonstrations, hunger strikes, petitions, and boycotts across the country and challenged secular rules that limited the visibility of conservative Muslim women and secularized forms of religious practice in Turkey (Çınar, 2005). The activism of conservative Muslim women played an integral role in Islamist mobilization, especially with the rise of Islamist parties, such as the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*). The Welfare Party joined a government coalition, and Necmettin Erbakan became the first Turkish Prime Minister from an Islamic party in 1996. The increasing role of the Welfare Party in the government led in 1997 to the 28 February coup and the subsequent closing down of the party by the constitutional court. After 1997, the headscarf ban was widely, and more strictly, enforced by the military.

With the rise of political Islam globally in the late Cold War context, secularism has been discursively reconstructed in binary opposition to Islamism. The politics of religion in Turkey constituted further evidence of an all-encompassing fissure between secularists and Islamists. In this period, several secular

(*Atatürkçü*) civil society organizations emerged as a response to the active role women with headscarves played in Islamist civil society, that challenged secularism's restriction of religious symbols in public space and organized protests against their exclusion from higher education and civil service (Çakır, 1990). In response, the new 'popular' secularism (*Atatürkçülük*) aligned strongly with the military's anti-pluralist stance and was promulgated as an absolute priority of national identity over religious, ethnic, and other collective identities (Navaro-Yashin, 2002; Özyürek, 2006).

This divide on secular–Islamic lines took on a new salience with the rise of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*—AKP), which came to power in the elections of 2002, and especially during the European Union (EU) accession process.

## The AKP rule and the moderate Muslim democracy

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p. 756 Following the 9/11 attacks, the USA promoted the 'moderate Islam' model for the Middle East, as a means of countering the rise of religious fundamentalism in the Muslim world (Tuğal, 2016). The first majority government by an Islamist party in Turkey, the AKP came to power in this international context. On the international as well as on the national stage, the AKP government immediately acquired political purchase as a model of harmonious coexistence of democracy and Islam. Simultaneously, a revisionist scholarship emerged claiming that the close alliance between Islam and the government was not as heavily interventionist as the secular equivalent; it was rather much more like the American 'passive secularism' (Kuru, 2009). Attributing an unchanging essence to the relationship between state and religion from the beginning of republican history, Kemalist secularism was also analysed through this lens as an 'exclusive', 'assertive', 'statist', and 'authoritarian' elite project of Westernization by a military–bureaucratic centre that aimed to control the 'pious Muslim majority' (Stepan, 2001; Kuru, 2009; Yavuz, 2009). Correspondingly, the AKP represented a 'new Turkey' that was described as 'third way', 'inclusive', 'passive', 'moderate', 'tolerant', or 'liberal' secularism that signified a more enhanced public role for religion in Turkish life and emancipated religion from the central statist secular elites (Turam, 2007; Kuru, 2009; Shakman Hurd, 2009).

## Democracy and equality under the AKP

Just as the earlier literature on Turkey emphasized the establishment of secularism as a modernist ideal (Berkes, 1964) that aimed to marginalize Islam in favour of Western secularism, so also—and starting in the 1990s—has an analysis of Islam as a bottom-up source for morality and democratic politics come to dominate the literature on Turkey. This literature drew on prominent critiques of secularism that argued it confined religion to the private sphere (Casanova, 1994), and assumed a sharp divide between religion and politics (Asad, 2003). Accordingly, this scholarship analysed the role of Islam in Turkish society in two interrelated ways. The first, following Casanova's insights on the emancipatory capacities of the deprivatization of religion (1994) argued that a flourishing Islamic civil society provided an effective 'critique of statist sovereignty over religion' (Walton, 2017: 116). This perspective on religion as a grassroots or bottom-up phenomenon in Turkey underpinned in turn analyses that have portrayed these movements as defenders of individual freedoms and gender equality against an authoritarian secular state (Göle, 1996; Özdalga, 1997; White, 2002; Yavuz, 2003).

The second line of analysis considered Islam as the major source of a morally sustainable life. In line with the centre–periphery argument that analysed Islam as national ethos (Mardin, 1973), a prominent line of scholarship has argued for a moral vacuum in Turkish public life prompted by the marginalization of Islam (Yavuz, 2009). According to this approach, Islamic movements expanded the role of Islamic norms and local



identities in the public sphere and provided a unifying moral basis for the Turkish nation that the top-down secularism project lacked (Yavuz, 2019).

p. 757 This analysis, which put AKP in diametric opposition to Kemalist policies regarding religion, underplayed the prominence of Sunni Muslim identity as an exclusionary practice for both political projects. Indeed, the AKP's Muslim democracy model highlighted the dilemmas of deploying a Sunni Islam as a salient category for achieving ↪ national unity at the expense of religious, ethnic, and gender equality. In short Sunni Muslim privilege, rather than democratic understanding, dominated AKP's policies regarding individual freedoms, including freedom of religion, a fact that came to the fore during the EU accession process.

## The European Union accession process and the freedom of religion

In light of the bigger political question of proving Islam's compatibility with the West, with secularism and with human rights, the EU accession process became a litmus test for democratization prospects under the AKP government. The debates over Turkish accession in this period were marked by discussions on the character of Turkey's relationship with Europe. Both European opposition to and support for Turkish accession to the EU further highlighted the secular-religious binary. Opposing parties questioned an Islamist government's compatibility with 'secular liberal European norms' (Shakman Hurd, 2009). Those in favour of Turkey's membership argued that Europe needed Turkey because of the country's highly strategic position between Europe and the Middle East. This political camp subsequently advocated for the compatibility of Islam with European democratic values.

In its first term in parliament (2002–7), the AKP government implemented a set of political reforms with the purpose of fulfilling the Copenhagen Criteria for EU membership. Accordingly, the government lifted the restrictions on political and civil rights, such as the freedom of assembly, associations, and expression. An especially important part of this process was the minority protection conditionality stipulated by the Copenhagen Criteria that obliged Turkey to undertake legal reforms. Accordingly, between 2002 and 2006, the AKP government passed a series of reforms to harmonize Turkey's judicial system, civil-military relations, and human rights practices. At the centre of these reforms were policies regarding individual rights. Drawing on the EU's human rights discourse, the AKP framed individual rights and religious freedoms by two issues: the headscarf issue as a women's rights and human rights issue and minority rights as the showcase for religious tolerance.

p. 758 The ban on the headscarf was successively removed from 2011 onwards in public universities, the civil service, police, army, and primary public schools. However, while embracing a narrative of women's rights through the issue of the headscarf, the AKP simultaneously reproduced a patriarchal nationalist discourse. Chiefly, through the Directorate of Religious Affairs, the National Education Council (Milli Eğitim Şurası) and the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services (changing the name of the State Ministry responsible for Women and the Family by dropping 'women' in 2011) the governing party institutionalized conservative Sunni Islam with the aim of reframing education and social relations. Most tellingly, the Diyanet issued public statements in line with the government's conservative position on topics such as the protection of ↪ family, children, youth, marriage, divorce, homosexuality, and domestic violence (Kaos GL, 2009; Tütüncü, 2010; Lord, 2018).

In the field of public education, a new Education Law in 2012 led the way to the opening of many additional secondary schools for training Sunni clergy (Imam Hatip schools) making these the main option for students of lower middle-class families instead of regular public schools. In 2014, the 19th National Education Council under the Education Ministry approved compulsory religion classes starting from the first grade in elementary schools (Özgül, 2019).

These policies, however, had adverse effects on gender equality even after the lift of the headscarf ban. Although gaining the important right to wear headscarves in state-run institutions, the AKP's increasingly nationalist and patriarchal policies effectively marginalized the gendered politics and practices of Muslim women. These became subordinate to the pious–secular binary and to the larger patriarchal conservative framework of family, nation, religion, and the state, similar to that of statist secularist ideology (Maritato, 2017; Sehlíkoglu, 2018).

In the field of minority rights, marking the ongoing hegemony of Sunni Muslim identity in national politics, the AKP's application of these reforms was limited to a discourse of Islamic tolerance that did not recognize equal citizenship rights (Kaya, 2013). The reforms stood for an idea of confessional pluralism without acknowledging past injustices (Özgül, 2014). Alevi groups especially criticized reform efforts as being sectarian due to the persistence of their problems regarding compulsory religious education and equal access to state resources for Alevi places of worship (Karakaya–Stump, 2018). The AKP's policies regarding ethnic diversity in the country also took a confessional perspective. The proposed solution to the Kurdish minority's political problems underlined Sunni Islam as the tie that binds Kurds and Turks (Aktürk, 2018). As part of this political thrust and based on a Sunni doctrinal perspective, the Diyanet assumed a major role in political debates on ethnic difference (Lord, 2018).

## Sunni Muslim privilege and the parallels of secular and religious

The EU-led reform period came to an end during the AKP's third term with the party's growing authoritarian policies. In this later period, the literature on religion was mainly centred on a criticism of the AKP's centralization of state power over religion via the Diyanet. These critiques of the AKP's nationalist authoritarianism relied either on competing Kemalist and Muslim nationalisms as powerful group identities (White, 2012) or on the AKP's growing authoritarianism as a deviation from its earlier democratic policies due to its suppression of 'society-based Islamic networks' (Yavuz, 2019: 19).

p. 759 The continuing emphasis of these AKP critics on the binary between Islam and secularism as competing identities in Turkey, and on Sunni Islam as the core of true democratic politics, misses the centrality of the nationalist and patriarchal discourse for the AKP as well as for state secularism in determining acceptable forms of belonging. In a national environment where there are serious doubts about the viability of including diversity into the national body, the question of when a group is considered a threat remain central to the definition of majority.

From the early 2010s, the increasing political disapproval of the AKP government's neoliberal, authoritarian, and patriarchal practices across different sectors of society led to public expressions of discontent, such as boycotts, petitions, and demonstrations, that culminated in the Gezi uprising of 2013 and continued with teacher and student boycotts of AKP's education policies (Parla and Özgül, 2016; Özgül, 2019). The security measures after the failed coup of 2016, and the implementation of a state of emergency, suspending the constitution and consolidating the party's leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's power by constitutional referendum in 2017, further strengthened the centrality of Sunni Muslim identity for national sovereignty over (and war against) 'non-national' elements. In this period, LGBT+ and feminist activism and especially International Women's Day and Pride celebrations emerged as main venues of protest (Çağatay, 2018; Tar, 2020). The diversity that underscored these protests included a wide cross-section of activists ranging from ethnic and religious minorities to observant Muslim women. However, the ruling AKP framed these protests as reactions by the urban, middle-class Kemalist elite to AKP's rule, and criminalized them as dangers to the public order and public health (Karaca, 2019). Since 2016, these public assemblies have been increasingly equated with terrorist activities and violently subdued. Thus, the ideology of a Sunni Muslim majority, an entity created at the cost of other identities and politics has

continued to expand the category of 'traitors', now not only marked by different religion and ethnicity, but also by gender and sexual orientation, over an ever-expanding range of issues.

## Conclusion

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In Turkey, the question of what constitutes religious identity has gone hand in hand with the creation and reassertion of a Muslim majority and exclusion of various religious and ethnic groups. To take the statistical majority as an explanatory category for religion in Turkey obscures the fragments within the construct of national unity. Whether it is the glorification of Turkey as a secular model for the 'Muslim World', or the celebratory narratives of the pluralist possibilities of a democratic Muslim majority based on a tolerant Ottoman past, these sweeping generalizations ignore the extent to which Sunni Islam has been delineated as the base of national unity. This preoccupation with unity has been a central feature of both secular and religious discourse in Turkey. The questions of who belongs to the majority, and when a minority is considered a threat, are all central to the definition of religion. What is at stake in the debate on religion in Turkey, therefore, is not the secular-religious binary as such, but the future of justice, equality, and democracy.

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CHAPTER

## 44 Ukraine and Russia

Heather J. Coleman

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### Abstract

This chapter describes the intertwined religious and political histories of Russia and Ukraine, focusing on church–state relations and religion’s role in relations between the two nations. It analyzes the common origins of these countries in medieval Kyivan Rus’, and the ongoing debate about the significance of the decision to accept Orthodox Christianity in 988 to both the relationship between church and state and the cultural orientation of Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians. It traces the legacy of separate religious development in the medieval era; changing church–state relations in Russia; the use of religion as a mode of governance; the civilizational debate about Orthodoxy and European identity; the experience under the Soviet regime; religious revival amid the collapse of communism; and post-communist tensions about the role of religion in a pluralist society, and about competing visions of a ‘Russian World’ on one hand and autocephaly for Ukrainian Orthodoxy on the other.

**Keywords:** [Russia](#), [Ukraine](#), [Belarus](#), [Orthodoxy](#), [church–state relations](#), [autocephaly](#), [communism](#), [pluralism](#)

**Subject:** [History of Religion](#), [Religion](#)

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UKRAINIANS and Russians (and Belarusians too) trace their cultural and state origins to the early Rus’ principality that emerged in the ninth century around Kyiv (Kiev in Russian), the present-day capital of Ukraine. In 988, Grand Prince Vladimir of Kyiv (r. 978–1015) accepted baptism from the Greeks in the Crimean city of Chersonesus, then ordered the mass baptism of his people. This decision confirmed his realm’s geopolitical and cultural reorientation from the Eurasian steppe towards Europe. The fact that he chose the eastern, Byzantine Greek (Orthodox) form of Christianity has traditionally been regarded as a crucial turning point that would forever shape the eastern Slavs’ politics and culture. However, the significance of the choice has long been contested. What are the implications of Byzantine traditions for the relationship between church and state in Orthodox countries? Is Russia bound to follow an historical path similar to that of Western Europe, or should it look to Orthodoxy as the basis for an alternative civilization? Does a shared past mean a shared future for Ukraine and Russia?

As elsewhere in Europe, Christianity played an important role in state and national identity building throughout the intertwined histories of Russia and Ukraine. Moreover, religion has served both to unite and to divide them. Because the disentangling of those histories has been a crucial aspect of the elaboration of new, independent, post-Soviet identities, and because the Soviet Union disintegrated amid a dramatic religious revival, questions about religion's place in civil society and state identity have been important in the domestic politics but also in the international relations of the two nations. These debates have played out against the backdrop of a thousand years of history, with their legacy of common beginnings, separate medieval and early modern paths, the rise and fall of empire, and the persecution of religion under communism.

p. 765 After reviewing key legacies of the medieval and early modern eras, this chapter focuses on the relationship between church and state since the nineteenth century. Crucial themes include the evolving position of the Orthodox Church in relation to state and society, the complex intertwining of religion and national identity, the tensions between 'symphony' and pluralism in modern Orthodox societies, the use of religion as a tool of governance in multi-ethnic states, and Orthodoxy as a source of European identity but also of ambivalence towards Europe.

## From Holy Rus' to the Holy Synod, tenth to eighteenth century

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The medieval and early modern history of the eastern Slavs retains unusual resonance in the modern era. There is an enduring tradition of explaining the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, subsequent communist attempts to build a totalitarian society, and the choices made by Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) leaders in the face of communist persecution with reference to Orthodoxy's alleged theology of submissiveness (Pipes, 1974: 222) or to historical patterns of behaviour. More concretely, it is impossible to understand the modern Ukrainian religious landscape and tensions between Russian and Ukrainian Orthodoxy without knowledge of key historical events and of the organization of Orthodox churches.

Much has been made of Vladimir's choice of Orthodox Christianity for understanding the place of Kyivan Rus' in medieval Europe and the nature of church-state relations. Dimitri Obolensky described the world that the Rus' joined as the 'Byzantine Commonwealth', a 'single international community' with a common cultural and political tradition (Obolensky, 1971: 1). After the Churches of Rome and Constantinople split in 1054, the Rus' were fated to a separate development from Western Europe. In church affairs, this meant the influence of a distinctive Byzantine model of the church and church-state relations. Unlike the centralized Roman Church, Orthodoxy is a family of autocephalous (self-governing) local churches. The Ecumenical Patriarch (of Constantinople) enjoys particular honour but cannot interfere in the internal affairs of other Orthodox churches. It has been a truism that the Greeks practised 'caesaropapism', where the emperor was head of both the state and the church—and that, later, the Russian Empire represented the apogee of the principle. Caesaropapism is usually contrasted with the division of spiritual and earthly government in Roman Catholic Europe. However, historians and theologians generally disagree, arguing that the Byzantine vision was of a symbiotic 'symphony' between secular and religious power, where each had its sphere and one did not dominate the other. Certainly, throughout Russian and Ukrainian history, the symphonic ideal has been asserted and its meaning debated (Ware, 1997: 7–8, 40–1; Parry, 2010: 78–9, 468–9).

p. 766 In 1240, the Mongols sacked Kyiv. Thereafter, the northern and southern Rus' territories took separate paths: the south-west and south-east (from Galicia to Kyiv) were absorbed by Poland and Lithuania by the 1360s; meanwhile, the principality of Moscow gradually expanded its reach over all the north-eastern principalities, emerging from Mongol control by the late fifteenth century as a unitary state with one sovereign prince. This period also saw religious division. The Metropolitan of Kyiv fled to the north-east. His successors aligned their fate with Moscow (while retaining the title of Metropolitan of Kyiv).

Ecclesiastical instability ensued across the region, as separate metropolitanates were established against their wishes in Galicia and Lithuania. Fundamental religious division came in the mid-fifteenth century. Unwilling to acquiesce to the 1439 decision of the Council of Florence to reunite the Western and Eastern churches, Muscovite bishops consecrated their own metropolitan in 1448, without involving the patriarch; henceforth, the Metropolitanate of Moscow and all Rus' became in practice autocephalous, while a separate Metropolitanate of Kyiv with jurisdiction over the Rus' of Poland-Lithuania remained under the Ecumenical Patriarch (Bremer, 2013: 15–16).

Muscovy entered the sixteenth century as the only independent Orthodox country. In 1453, Constantinople, the 'Second' Rome, had fallen to the Ottoman Turks. Russian churchmen developed a doctrine of theocratic monarchy, arguing that the other Orthodox realms had lost their independence by falling into heresy; therefore, Muscovy's Orthodox tsar had a duty to uphold Canon law and the purity of the faith. This idea, that Moscow was the Third Rome, has often been portrayed as the guiding Muscovite ideology and the basis for centuries of Russian expansionism. In fact, it was used officially only in 1589 when the Ecumenical Patriarch came to Moscow in search of assistance and was strong-armed into recognizing the Russian Church's autocephaly by enthroning Job, Metropolitan of Moscow, as the first Russian patriarch (1589–1605). The Russian Church, however, deployed the theory to preserve a symphony of church and state in the face of increasingly powerful tsars (Poe, 2001: 413–18).

Meanwhile, the Rus' (Ruthenians) living in Poland-Lithuania found themselves in desperate straits. The Patriarchate of Constantinople in the Ottoman Empire was in a state of near collapse and the Protestant and Catholic reform movements challenged the Ruthenian Church to regenerate itself. In 1596 the Ruthenian bishops signed the Union of Brest-Litovsk. The resulting Uniate Church embraced Latin doctrine and recognized the supremacy of the pope, while preserving Eastern Christian liturgical traditions. The Ruthenian Church was henceforth split: pro-Union bishops regarded it as a means to reinvigorate the Church, but strong Orthodox opposition rejected this path. In self-defence, the Orthodox founded the Kyiv Academy on the Jesuit model in 1632. Many graduates made their way to Muscovy, where they served as key conduits of Western European culture to the inward-looking Muscovite elite. Moreover, in 1667 eastern Ukraine, part of Belarus, and the city of Kyiv came under Muscovite control. In 1686 the Metropolitan of Kyiv placed his Church under the patriarch of Moscow rather than Constantinople. The fate of Ukrainian and Russian Orthodoxy has remained intertwined ever since.

The mid-seventeenth century saw a showdown between church and state in Muscovy. Patriarch Nikon (1652–66) sought to revitalize Orthodoxy and to assert the Russian Church's leadership of the Orthodox world through reforms to strengthen the hierarchy's control and standardize liturgical practice. However, his assertion of the Church's authority over that of the state eventually led to his downfall. A church council in 1666–7 deposed Nikon and endorsed the principle of the supremacy of the state over the Church, but also approved his changes to prayer books and rituals to bring them into conformity with Greek (and Ukrainian) practices. The result was schism, as the Old Believers rejected these reforms. The Church emerged profoundly weakened.

These developments set the stage for fundamental transformation in the relationship between church and state, and between Russia and Europe, under Peter the Great (r. 1682–1725). Peter's radical programme to build a secular absolutist monarchy to compete with other European states required a cultural revolution, including reform of the Church. In 1700, the patriarch died and Peter did not summon a council to elect a successor. When he began to reorganize the government into administrative colleges on the Swedish model, he envisioned a 'Spiritual College' of bishops, modelled on the state churches of Lutheran Scandinavia and Germany, to replace the patriarchate. In 1721, he established the Most Holy Governing Synod and laid out its structure and the position of the Church in the state in the 'Spiritual Regulation'. It required that clergy take an oath of allegiance and disseminate government information. Most controversially, priests were obligated to report sedition in their parishes, even breaking the confidentiality of confession dictated by canon law. In

1722, Peter created the office of over procurator of the Synod, a layman to serve as the 'tsar's eye' in church affairs.

The establishment of the Holy Synod has traditionally been regarded as a profound break with Orthodox tradition, when the Church was decapitated and reduced to a mere 'handmaiden of the state'. Richard Pipes famously summarized this view of a church that 'identified itself to such an extent with the monarchy that when the latter fell, it went right down with it' (Pipes, 1974: 222–3). Certainly, the abolition of the patriarchate changed the Church's position within the state and the Orthodox world. For example, the secular ruler now selected and appointed bishops; later, Catherine II (r. 1762–96) proclaimed religious toleration for non-Orthodox confessions, secularized church lands, and closed over two-thirds of the empire's monasteries. However, Gregory Freeze contends that, rather than incorporating the Church into the state, the Spiritual Regulation created parallel 'spiritual' and 'secular' realms. The Church retained considerable operational autonomy in the eighteenth century; the position of the over-procurator was one of supervision and influence, but remained organizationally outside of the Synod and without levers to supervise bishops in their dioceses (Freeze, 1985: 85, 89–91).

Catherine II's declaration of religious tolerance acts as a reminder that, since the conquest of the khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan in the 1550s, Russia had become a multi-ethnic and multi-religious empire, raising questions about the management of diversity. By the 1760s, the pragmatic Muscovite approach of assuming that particular faiths were characteristics of particular peoples and allowing those peoples to practise, so long as they did not attempt to convert the Orthodox, laid the basis for what Paul Werth calls the 'multiconfessional Orthodox state'. Religious toleration became a means of integrating new groups into the empire by soliciting the cooperation of their religious elites (Werth, 2014: 38). But because faiths were associated with peoples, tolerance did not apply to Old Believers or Uniates. A major element of Catherine II's rhetoric during the partitioning of Poland from 1772 to 1795 was the reconstitution of Kyivan Rus' and the defence of Orthodoxy and the 'Russian' (Ukrainian and Belarusian) population (whose culture had in fact diverged from the Russian over many centuries). The incorporation of these territories brought recognition of Roman Catholicism for Poles and Judaism for Jews, but also a forceful campaign to 'return' the Uniates to their 'native' Orthodoxy (Skinner, 2009: 199–200). In 1839, the remaining 1.5 million Uniates (including the majority of Belarusians) were 'reunited' to Orthodoxy and the Uniate Church was abolished in the Russian Empire.

p. 768

## The Russian Empire, Orthodoxy, and 'Europe', 1800–1917

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The spread of romantic nationalist ideas within Russian educated society in the early nineteenth century had a major impact on Russian intellectual and state life beginning in the reign of Nicholas I (r. 1825–55). Although Russia was now the dominant military power on the European continent, Nicholas' regime developed a slogan, 'Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality', to assert Russia's fundamental distinctiveness. Dubbed Official Nationality, it remained the state ideology until 1917.

Meanwhile, ideas about Orthodoxy and Russia's relationship to European culture were at the core of a great civilizational debate that erupted in the 1830s and 1840s. Both sides rejected Official Nationality and the bureaucratic authoritarianism of Nicholas' regime, but they disagreed in their evaluation of Russia's past and future. The Slavophiles contrasted an idealized pre-Petrine Russia imbued with organic, religious, and collective values with the Europeanized Russia of Peter I, characterized by excessive rationality, political conflict, and materialism. Russia needed to return to authentic Russian values preserved in the peasant commune, an allegedly collectivist and cooperative system of government unlike the individualism and competition of the West, and in Orthodoxy. Rejecting the bureaucratic Church of the Spiritual Regulation, Aleksei Khomiakov argued that Orthodoxy's strength lay in its spirit of *sobornost'* (from the word *sobor* or

council), an idea of 'active unity in plurality' like that expressed by the commune (Shevzov, 2004: 28–31). By contrast, the 'Westernizers', a diverse group of liberals and socialists, believed that Russia's destiny lay in Europe and that Russia could learn from the West.

Khomiakov's ideas shaped discussion in the late nineteenth century within the Church and in lay society about how the Church should be organized and its relationship to the state and to the nation. Indeed, the nineteenth century saw both increased interference of the over procurators and mounting criticism of the Synodal Church. Following the 1861 abolition of serfdom, the Russian government overhauled all state institutions. The church reforms, initiated largely by the state, applied the general principles of the secular reforms to the Church. The initially supportive bishops resisted once they realized that the state intended to reduce their authority and that a proposed reform of the ecclesiastical judicial system violated Canon law. They called for a return to the pre-Petrine model of regular bishops' councils to govern the Church. Meanwhile, disenchanted parish priests mobilized to defend their socio-economic interests.

p. 769 Ironically, tension between church and state worsened under Alexander III (r. 1881–94) and Nicholas II (r. 1894–1917), two pious rulers who emphasized the religious basis of their authority. Their ideologist, Over-Procurator of the Synod Konstantin Pobedonostsev, oversaw the establishment of thousands of parish primary schools. However, the bishops quickly began to chafe at his relentless interference in what they considered their sphere.

During the 1905 revolution, the Church was no mere 'handmaiden of the state'. Although it sought to avert violence and defend the existing order, it also joined the population in calling for reform. A crucial turning point was Nicholas II's manifesto on religious toleration of 17 April 1905, which made it legal to leave the Orthodox Church and allowed Old Believers and sectarians to practise openly. Tens of thousands of former Uniates in the Belarusian lands transferred to the Roman Catholic Church. Although the Orthodox Church preserved its monopoly on proselytizing, the edict represented a major shift towards the principle of freedom of conscience in government policy. The Synod, against the wishes of Pobedonostsev, appealed to Nicholas II to convene a church council—the first since the seventeenth century—to address the Church's many problems and to consider the restoration of the patriarchate. Nicholas II approved the Synod's request in principle, but deferred summoning the council to more 'propitious' times.

In the semi-constitutional order that resulted from the 1905 Revolution, Orthodox clergymen served as deputies in all elected Dumas (parliaments), representing a range of parties from left-liberal to reactionary. Tensions arose about the authority of the secular, multiconfessional Duma to address matters that the Church considered to belong in its sphere, such as religious tolerance, divorce, clergy salaries, or parish schools. Although some clergy initially looked to such right-wing parties as the Union of Russian People, which claimed to defend Orthodoxy, autocracy, and Russianness, the hierarchy quickly distanced itself from them. Even conservative churchmen became disillusioned with autocracy in the last years of the empire. Grigorii Rasputin, a self-proclaimed 'holy man', gained great influence with the imperial family and insinuated himself into church policy, encouraging Nicholas II to overrule the Synod in various ways. Many clergy came to believe the Church needed autonomy and a collegial model of rule (Freeze, 1996: 338). When the monarchy collapsed in February 1917, the Synod declined to come to its defence.

As for Ukrainians, they found themselves on two sides of the border between the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires. In Russia, Ukrainians were fully integrated as 'Russians' into the Orthodox Church, although by the early twentieth century Ukrainophile and Russophile currents had developed among clergy. In Austrian Galicia, by contrast, religion and nationality became closely intertwined. Ukrainians there adhered to the Greek Catholic (Uniate) Church. Priests emerged as leaders of the early Ruthenian political movement. That movement wrestled with the question of the relationship between Ruthenian and Russian culture and between Greek Catholicism and Orthodoxy. Russophiles opposed the formation of a distinctive Ukrainian language and worked to promote religious unity with 'Greater Rus'. By contrast, Ukrainophiles

p. 770 regarded the ROC as a threat to Ruthenian identity and focused on establishing the independence of the Greek Catholic Church. Meanwhile, the Greek Catholic hierarchy trod carefully, seeking to preserve legitimacy and authority while caught between Rome, the Austrian authorities, and an increasingly nationalized population (Himka, 1999: 10–12, 164–7). When the Russian Army occupied Galicia during the First World War, the ‘reunification’ of Uniates with the ROC constituted an important—and sharply resisted—policy.

The revolutionary year of 1917 transformed Russian religious life. In March, the new Provisional Government declared freedom of conscience and the abolition of all restrictions based on class, religion, or nationality. For groups such as the Jews or Baptists, a new era of freedom dawned. The Orthodox Church, too, experienced an ‘ecclesiastical revolution’ (Rogoznyi, 2014: 352). The declaration of freedom of conscience raised anew the question of the Orthodox Church’s relationship with the state; and the proclamation of democracy invited Orthodox Christians to work out in practice the meaning of conciliarism in church life.

The key religious event of 1917 was the convocation, on 15 August, of the All-Russian Council of the Orthodox Church. It represented the religious expression of the broader revolutionary social mobilization and the culmination of the reform movement among both clergy and laity. Across the country, diocesan congresses of clergy and laity discussed church reform and elected delegates to the Council. These were the setting for a revolution from below, as the elective principle was introduced in church life. In numerous dioceses, elections of bishops occurred. Monasteries and parishes also sought to reorganize themselves according to the conciliar and elective principles. The relative power of the laity, parish clergy, monastics, and bishops was hotly debated. When delegates gathered in the Moscow Kremlin, not only bishops, but also parish clergy and laity were represented. Indeed, laymen constituted over half their number. Discussions focused on the nature of conciliarity and how to introduce it throughout church life.

Despite this emphasis on conciliarity, the Council’s most significant decision was to restore the patriarchate. A pre-Council commission had advocated a collective model of leadership. However, as political instability mounted in autumn 1917, the vision of a patriarch as a unifying figure and a face for the Church in negotiations with potentially hostile governments gained ground. Delegates struggled to find a formula that would restore the patriarchate within a conciliarist system. The vote in favour of this new model took place on 28 October, three days after the Bolsheviks seized power. On 5 November, Metropolitan Tikhon (Bellavin) of Moscow was elected patriarch (1917–25) (Destivelle, 2015: 76–85). He would lead the Church through the first years of intense conflict with Russia’s new communist rulers.

## Religion under communism, 1917–91

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p. 771 The Bolsheviks came to power determined to create not just a secular government but a new civilization free of all religion. As they sought to reorient all of society towards the goal of building socialism, they faced the religious energies that the revolution had unleashed and the reality that religion remained an important alternative source of identity and social organization for large swathes of the population. The Bolsheviks’ strategy involved both legal measures to undermine religious institutions and antireligious propaganda.

The new leaders moved quickly to secularize the state, requiring civil marriage and civil registration of vital statistics, and transferring all schools to the Commissariat of Education. On 19 January 1918, in a letter to the faithful, Patriarch Tikhon anathematized those who participated in attacks on the Church and called on believers to defend the Church peacefully (contrary to the interpretation of the Bolsheviks and many historians since, he did not condemn Soviet power as such but rather specific actions) (Kenworthy, 2018: 9–10). The Decree on the Separation of Church and State of 23 January declared religion to be a private matter; abolished subsidies to the Church; nationalized religious property; denied religious societies legal status;

and banned the teaching of religion in schools. The 1918 Soviet Constitution disenfranchised clergy of all faiths.

Serious famine in 1922 provided the pretext for a multi-pronged attack on religion. Patriarch Tikhon summoned the faithful to donate non-liturgical objects to be sold to aid the starving. Irked, the regime decreed instead that congregations hand over all church valuables. Violent confrontations ensued. The state responded with mass arrests, group trials, and execution of perceived ringleaders, and placed Tikhon under house arrest. Simultaneously, the state undertook to break religious organizations from within, sponsoring schisms in faiths ranging from the Orthodox and Evangelical Christians to the Jews. Thus in April to May 1923, a Renovationist Church council supported by the Soviet secret police voted to abolish the patriarchate, allow married clergy to be ordained bishops, and to put Patriarch Tikhon on trial for his opposition to communism. In June 1923, Tikhon published a controversial 'Declaration of Repentance' announcing that the Church would no longer oppose Soviet rule. Repression continued, but when he died in 1925, crowds filled the Moscow streets for his funeral. No council could be convened to elect a successor and Metropolitan of Moscow Sergii (Starogodskii) became de facto leader of the Church. Seeking to end persecution, in July 1927 he issued an infamous declaration of complete loyalty to the Soviet regime. However, greater terror was on the doorstep with Joseph Stalin's rise to power.

Meanwhile, the revolutionary era saw the rise of nationalism, which also threatened the unity of the ROC. Movements for autonomy or autocephaly appeared, for example, among the Orthodox in Georgia, Belarus, and Ukraine. With the emergence of the nation-state in the nineteenth century, the issue of the relationship between nationalism and religion arose within Orthodoxy, with its decentralized structure of local (territorially defined) autocephalous churches. The Patriarch of Constantinople faced calls for autonomy or autocephaly in newly formed Romania, Bulgaria, and Serbia, for example. Although the Patriarchate eventually recognized the autocephaly of these churches, in 1872 it condemned *ethnophyletism*, where a local church's identity is exclusively national. In Kyiv, an All-Ukrainian Church Council convened in January 1918 with the blessing of the All-Russian Council. It decided to seek autonomy within the ROC, rather than autocephaly, and rejected calls to use the Ukrainian language (instead of Church Slavonic) in the liturgy. A split ensued, and in 1921 proponents of Ukrainianization founded the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC). However, the UAOC remained unrecognized by other Orthodox churches (Denysenko, 2018: 5, 21–57).

Despite the efforts of religious leaders to find means to operate legally, by the late 1920s another fierce round of anti-religious persecution began. The April 1929 Law on Religious Associations represented a crucial turning point. It required all congregations to register with the state and forbade the teaching of religion to the young and virtually any activities beyond the strictly liturgical. A constitutional amendment removed the right to conduct religious propaganda. By early 1930, most religious leaders had been arrested. Moreover, the regime now turned on the Renovationists and UAOC, which it had initially sponsored. Virtually all places of worship were closed in the early 1930s.

The 1929 Law remained the legal framework for religious life until 1990, but the Nazi invasion of the USSR in 1941 saw the introduction of a new pattern for managing religion that would likewise endure throughout the post war era. During the war, it became clear that some modification of religious policy was necessary. First, the regime needed to reduce social tension in order to rally the population to the war effort. Secondly, a religious revival in areas of the USSR under Nazi occupation such as Belarus and Ukraine suggested that the Soviets needed to find a way to work with religious organizations if they wished to reconquer those territories. Moreover, immediately after the invasion numerous religious leaders called on their followers to support the war effort, thus opening the door to a new relationship with Soviet power. The regime entered into a series of agreements with religious groups deemed loyal, allowing some legal existence under close administrative control.



Agreements signed between 1943 and 1945 allowed loyal Baptist, Muslim, and Armenian church groups to set up central administrations, publish journals, and reopen some places of worship. The ROC, too, emerged from underground. In 1943, the state permitted the election of Metropolitan Sergii as the new patriarch. Some churches reopened, bishops and priests were ordained, and a theological institute opened in Moscow. Simultaneously, the regime established a new bureaucracy to supervise religious life. It consisted of a Council for Russian Orthodox Church Affairs (CROCA) and a Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults (CARC), which controlled all other religious groups (combined into the Council for Religious Affairs in 1965). Secret police officers comprised a large component of their staff.

The CROCA used the Moscow Patriarchate as a tool for reintegrating parts of Ukraine and Belarus reconquered from the Nazis and incorporating new western territories. During the war, not only had many churches reopened, but the occupiers had sponsored Belarusian and Ukrainian Orthodox churches independent of Moscow. All Orthodox were now forcibly brought under the Moscow Patriarchate. Meanwhile, in western Ukraine, in March 1946, the Soviet authorities organized the Church Council of Lviv, which ended the 1596 Union of Brest and 'returned' Greek Catholics to the ROC (Chumachenko, 2002: 43–4).

p. 773 Although legalized religious organizations acquired some ability to operate publicly in exchange for cooperation with the state, the Communist Party still preached atheism and discriminated against believers. However, antireligious campaigns remained lacklustre until 1959, when General Secretary Nikita Khrushchev launched a fierce attack on religion. More than a third of registered places of worship were closed by 1964 and the regime sought to root out all religious activity not held in registered prayer houses and led by registered clergy. In 1961, both the Orthodox and Baptist churches were forced to accept new statutes that facilitated increased state interference in their internal affairs (Smolkin, 2018: 74–82).

When Leonid Brezhnev replaced Khrushchev, the militant antireligious drive ended. His years as General Secretary (1964–82) saw a return to a mostly supervisory approach. They also witnessed the emergence of religion as a basis for dissidence. Indeed, one of the first Soviet dissident organizations was the Council of Prisoners' Relatives, established in 1964 by Evangelical Christian-Baptist women whose husbands were in prison for refusing to register their congregations according to the 1961 rules. The following year, the schism fomented within Baptist ranks by state interference was formalized with the creation of the illegal Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (CC ECB). Likewise, in late 1965, two Orthodox priests, Nikolai Eshliman and Gleb Iakunin, wrote open letters to both the patriarch and government calling for an end to state interference in church affairs. These letters were widely circulated underground (Corley, 1996: 244–5).

By the 1970s, Soviet religious dissidence had become an international issue. This was made possible, in part, by the regime's encouragement of religious groups' involvement in international bodies such as the World Council of Churches and the Council of European Churches. The government aimed to demonstrate freedom of religion in the USSR and extend Soviet influence. Generally, the various church leaders cooperated. However, international connections also provided opportunities for soliciting allies. The international human rights movement also contributed to greater awareness of prisoners of conscience. Especially after the USSR signed the 1975 Helsinki Accords, religious groups joined other dissidents in seeking to hold the Soviet government to its promise to respect human rights. Thus, Iakunin formed a Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights. Jewish activist Anatoly (Natan) Sharansky and CC ECB leader Georgii Vins were permitted to emigrate after years of imprisonment following campaigns by international human rights and religious organizations.

Overall, however, by the 1980s, the USSR appeared to be a highly secularized society, and a majority claimed to be atheists; no one predicted the great religious revival that would accompany the collapse of communism. Certainly, Mikhail Gorbachev did not come to power intending to improve religious



conditions, but his policies of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring), launched by late 1986, had this effect. With the loosening of press censorship and political controls, religious groups expanded the range of their public activities, repressed denominations resurfaced, imprisoned prisoners of conscience were released, and the press wrote more freely about history and religion. The population crowded into mosques, synagogues, and churches. The regime ↪ itself began to seek a rapprochement with religion, especially the ROC. In April 1988 in advance of the 1,000th anniversary of the Christianization of Rus', Gorbachev met with Patriarch Pimen (1970–90). In June, the millennium was celebrated in the presence of numerous foreign guests, and many churches reopened (Knox, 2005: 59).

Gorbachev hoped to enlist religious elements in his reform programme. He reached out to Catholics as well as Orthodox. In December 1989, he met Pope John Paul II; soon thereafter, the ban on the Ukrainian Catholic Church was lifted. The October 1990 Law on Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Organizations removed most restrictions on religious activity. However, the faithful did not always use this freedom in aid of Gorbachev's reforms. On the contrary, Catholicism became a vehicle for expressing repressed national identities in western Ukraine and Lithuania. Belarusian intellectuals developed a renewed interest in Uniatism. The monopoly of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine was challenged by both Greek Catholics and Ukrainian Autocephalists: by late 1991, together they had seized well over one-third of parishes in the Ukrainian Republic (Davis, 1995: 92). In the Russian Republic, too, Orthodoxy played a role in the revival of non-Soviet Russian identity.

For denominations that had existed legally since the 1940s, it was a period of both opportunity and risk. The public began to ask tough questions about the moral cost of cooperating with the Soviet regime and about infiltration by the secret police. For the leaders of the Orthodox Church, for example, not only was the 'reunification' with the Greek Catholics being publicly proclaimed a sham, but a team of experts was working through Committee on State Security (KGB) files, trying to identify collaborating bishops. Some churchmen pointed out that cooperation was the price of maintaining some legal existence for the Church and the faithful. The newly elected patriarch, Aleksii II (Ridiger) (1990–2008) publicly acknowledged his collaboration and asked for forgiveness.

Religion thus enjoyed a dramatic resurgence in the dying days of the communist regime. Scholars have suggested that this reveals distinctive patterns of secularization (compared to Western Europe) in the USSR. Like many other modern states, the Soviet state from Stalin to Gorbachev sought to use religion as a tool of governance. But it also engaged in forced antireligious and secularizing policies that both repressed and changed religion. The result was laicization of religious life and the development of a noninstitutional religiosity (Wanner, 2012: 9). These patterns would present challenges for religious institutions after communism.

## The post-Soviet era

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After the collapse of communism, in both the Russian Federation and in Ukraine, controversy arose over the proper relationship between the state and religious institutions and the meaning of religious diversity in these newly democratic states. These debates were shaped by both rejection of Soviet-era patterns of state interference and their ↪ reproduction, as well as by historically derived assumptions about the symphony of church and state, about the management of multiconfessional societies, and about Orthodoxy and European identity. Moreover, religion has been implicated in these newly independent countries' efforts to define themselves in relation to one another.

In Russia, the central question has been the relationship between the ROC and the state, and whether a restoration of 'symphony' is possible or in fact desirable. The Russian Federation's 1990 Law on Freedom of Worship established freedom of conscience, full equality of all religions, and strict separation of church and

state. The 1993 Constitution reaffirmed these principles. Yet the notion of symphony implies one dominant faith and a state whose character is defined by it. Thus the question of religious freedom has become deeply entangled with the fate of pluralistic civil society in Russia.

While explicitly rejecting the notion of a state church, Patriarch Aleksii II focused on restoring Orthodoxy to a prominent position in Russian society, seeking cooperation from the state in expanding Orthodox influence in schools and the military, restricting foreign missions, and recovering property seized in the Soviet era. His most important accomplishment was the passage of the 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations. This law responded to the influx of thousands of Western missionaries, especially evangelical Protestants. The Orthodox Church complained that this activity intruded on its canonical territory (Witte, 1998: 36).

The 1997 law favours 'traditional' faiths and especially Orthodoxy, thereby contradicting the 1993 constitution that declared all religions equal. Its preamble describes Orthodoxy as 'an inseparable part of the all-Russian historical, spiritual, and cultural heritage' and declares that the state respects Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism as 'religions constituting an integral part of the historical heritage of Russia's peoples'. The statute establishes a two-tiered system: a special category includes 'traditional' religious 'organizations' with full legal rights. These denominations had (it has since been changed) to show fifteen years of legal existence (that is, registration in the Soviet era). Those deemed non-traditional are classified as 'religious groups'. They may worship and teach the faith to followers, but many restrictions apply and they must register annually. Orthodoxy is the only faith eligible for state subsidies for the maintenance of 'monuments of history and culture' (Witte, 1998: 21). This law to some extent resurrects the 'multiconfessional Orthodox state' of the imperial era.

p. 776 Although the Orthodox Church on the ground remains ideologically diverse and often acts as a force for civil society, since the late 1990s and especially under Patriarch Kirill (Gundaev, enthroned in 2009), the official Church has embraced a missionary vision to rechristianize Russian Orthodox space, one that challenges pluralism, rejects the Western, secular discourse on human rights, and argues for a distinctive Russian civilization. Of particular importance is the 'Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church', a document developed under the leadership of then-Metropolitan Kirill and adopted in 2000. Although it rejects the idea of a state church and repudiates state interference in church affairs, the 'Social Concept' assumes that Russia is a 'predominantly Orthodox' society and advocates cooperation between church and state in a wide range of domains. Furthermore, it declares that 'the principle of freedom of conscience is not a natural human condition. The appearance of this concept is a result of the disintegration of the system of spiritual values' (Papkova, 2011: 32). Kirill's warnings that Western liberalism constitutes a danger to Russia's 'spiritual health' have resonated with the Putin regime's discourse about 'spiritual security'. A 2002 law 'On Combating Extremist Activity' defines extremism very broadly as 'stirring-up of social, racial, ethnic or religious discord' (Knox, 2019: 149). Various amendments to the 1997 law address 'religious extremism'. These provisions together have been used against various Muslim groups, but also to ban the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Salvation Army, and the video of the punk band Pussy Riot's 2012 performance of an anti-Putin song in a Moscow cathedral.

President Vladimir Putin and Patriarch Kirill have also cooperated in championing a vision of the 'Russian World'. Putin sponsored the establishment of the Russian World Foundation in 2007 to promote Russian language and culture. At the Russian World Assemblies in 2009 and 2010, Kirill spoke of the Russian World as an alternative civilization rooted in 'traditional' Orthodox values that he contrasted with Western individualism and liberalism. This transnational community is defined by the area of the Moscow Patriarchate's jurisdiction, encompassing Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Russian émigré Orthodox churches abroad. Kirill began regularly visiting sites in Ukraine associated with the Christianization of Rus', especially Kyiv and Crimea, and speaking of them as the birthplace of Holy Rus'. However, this expansionist-nationalist vision elicited considerable protest in Ukraine (Kozelsky, 2014: 232–3).

Indeed, questions of religious identity and independence have been central to Ukrainian state and nation building in the post-Soviet period. The position of religion in Ukrainian society and national life differs from that in Russia. Because there are several different churches with historical claims to be the national church of the Ukrainian people, pluralism has reigned in state practice. Nevertheless, assumptions about some sort of symphony of church and state (or nation) have also held sway; as new political forces formed in the early 1990s, there was a widespread sense that the new state required a united Ukrainian Orthodox Church independent of Moscow. Yet this quest has revealed unresolved canonical questions about the relationship between churches and nations (as opposed to territories) and the procedures for autocephaly. Advocates of autocephaly have sought support from the Ecumenical Patriarchate, harkening back to the Kyiv Metropolitanate's affiliation with Constantinople before 1686 and based on the fact that diaspora Ukrainian Orthodox churches are in communion with Constantinople. However, the Moscow Patriarchate uses the same documents from 1686 to defend its canonicity on Ukrainian soil (Bremer and Senyk, 2019: 36).

p. 777 This drive began even before the USSR collapsed. Faced with the re-emergence of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC), the Moscow Patriarchate declared it uncanonical, but also responded by changing the status of the Kyivan Metropolitanate to a local church with considerable autonomy within the Moscow Patriarchate: the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC-MP). In November 1991, a council of UOC-MP bishops requested autocephaly. Actively encouraging this move was President Leonid Kravchuk, who resurrected a slogan from Ukraine's brief independence in 1918, 'For an independent state—an independent church' (Davis, 1995: 97). In April 1992, Metropolitan Filaret (Denysenko) of the UOC-MP travelled to a synod in Moscow, where he presented an appeal for autocephaly. However, the council rejected the appeal and demanded Filaret's resignation. When he refused, the bishops of the UOC-MP met in a council in Kharkiv, removed Filaret, and elected in his place Metropolitan Volodymyr (Sabodan) (1992–2014). Filaret then joined the UAOC, and with the active support of Kravchuk, a hastily summoned synod in June 1992 formed a new church: the Ukrainian Orthodox Church — Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP). In 1995, Filaret was elected patriarch. However, none of the autocephalous Orthodox churches recognized the UOC-KP. Furthermore, the UAOC was itself split—only part of it acquiesced to the formation of the UOC-KP. Ukrainian governments have generally favoured Ukrainianizing tendencies in the various churches, and Orthodoxy over Catholicism (or the large Protestant minority), but presidents have differed in preferring either the UOC-MP or the UOC-KP (Bremer, 2016: 14–16). Scholars have noted that Kravchuk's heavy-handed efforts to establish a Ukraine-based national church recalled Soviet methods of religious management. His successor Leonid Kuchma adopted a generally neutral religious policy (Tataryn, 2001: 162). However, he too aspired to the creation of an autocephalous church, lobbying both Patriarchs Bartholomew and Aleksii. President Viktor Yushchenko (2005–10) actively courted Bartholomew, inviting him to a lavish celebration of the 1,020th anniversary of the baptism of Rus' in 2008, hoping he would recognize the UOC-KP's autocephaly. Bartholomew presided at the event but was careful to honour Patriarch Aleksii and made no promises to the UOC-KP. By contrast, five years later, the 1,025th anniversary of the Christianization became an opportunity for Yushchenko's pro-Russian successor, Viktor Yanukovych, to participate, along with his Russian and Belarusian counterparts, in a series of Moscow Patriarchate-organized events in the three countries emphasizing their common heritage (Denysenko, 2018: 186–90).

Later that year, in November 2013, the Euromaidan protests erupted, following Yanukovych's backing out of a planned Association Agreement with the European Union. Weeks of civil unrest led to his overthrow in February 2014, the Russian seizure of Crimea, and war in the Donbas. The Euromaidan was a political and social, but also religious event. Clergy of various denominations joined the protests or stood between the demonstrators and the security forces in an effort to prevent bloodshed. The UOC-KP offered St. Michael's Cathedral as a hospital for the wounded; Metropolitan Volodymyr of the UOC-MP invited government and people to the Caves Monastery for peace talks; and spontaneous ecumenical liturgies took place on the

Maidan (Independence Square) in Kyiv. The UOC-KP and the UGCC openly supported the demonstrators, whereas the UOC-MP was ambivalent and divided. The events of spring 2014 threatened Patriarch Kirill's Holy Rus' strategy: they revealed discord within Holy Rus' and that many Ukrainians preferred liberal 'European' values over his conservative vision (Suslov, 2016: 140). Russian church officials blamed 'Uniates' and 'schismatics' for fomenting the polarization of Ukrainian society. Meanwhile, during 2014, about 500 (of 12,673) UOC-MP parishes switched their allegiance to the UOC-KP (Bremer, 2016: 16). Table 44.1 indicates the allegiance of registered parishes in Ukraine and Russia in 2018, as well as the population's religious self-identification. ↴

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The Euromaidan and war in the Donbas thus upset the state of affairs in Ukrainian Orthodoxy, raising anew the question of the legitimacy of the UOC-MP and the relationship between church, state, and nation in Ukraine. They also opened the door to state intervention in religious life, as officials tried to use the church unity question to rally the population against Russia. Thus, ahead of a council of autocephalous Orthodox churches in Crete in June 2016, the Ukrainian parliament petitioned the Ecumenical Patriarch to grant autocephaly to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. In summer 2018, worried about his prospects for re-election the following spring, President Petro Poroshenko seized on a nationalist agenda, including promotion of autocephaly. In July 2018, Bartholomew announced that he planned to grant autocephaly to Ukrainian Orthodoxy. He summoned the bishops of all three Ukrainian Orthodox churches to a council on 15 December to form a new Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU). Poroshenko sat at the presiding table of the council and later announced the newly elected head of the OCU to the crowd. On 5 January 2019, Patriarch Bartholomew issued a decree of autocephaly to the new church. However, the sought-after church unity appeared stillborn: on 15 October 2018, the Russian Church voted to break off relations with Constantinople, and only two bishops of the UOC-MP attended the council. On 22 December, Poroshenko signed a law requiring the UOC-MP to change its name to make its affiliation with the ROC clear. The state thus appeared to be quite explicitly sponsoring its own church.

Meanwhile, in Belarus, the Minsk diocese was elevated to the Belarus Exarchate by the Moscow Patriarchate in 1989; after independence the officially semi-autonomous ↴ local church was renamed the Belarusian Orthodox Church. The regime of Alyaksandr Lukashenka has consistently restricted the activities of the largely émigré-based Belarusian Autocephalous Orthodox Church. The substantial Roman Catholic minority has enjoyed revival and expansion, whereas the Belarusian Greek-Catholic (Uniate) Church counts only a handful of parishes (Alshanskaya, 2020).

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**Table 44.1** Religious landscape in Russia and Ukraine, 2018.

Denomination	Registered parishes – Russia 2018	Registered parishes – Ukraine 2018	Self-indentification - Russia 2012 (%)	Self-indentification - Ukraine 2018 (%)
UOC-MP	17,231	12,064	41	12.9
UOC-KP	7	4,807	-	28.7
UAOC	-	1,048	-	0.3
‘Just Orthodox’	-	-	-	23.4
UGCC	7	3,323	-	9.4
Baptist	827	2,379	-	Under 0.5
Pentecostal	974	1,533	-	Under 0.5
Muslim	5,777	250	6.5	-
Protestant	-	-	0.2	-
Atheist	-	-	13	7.7

Source: Data from Sreda, 2012: 11; Tsentr Razumkova, 2018: 13, 17; Federal State Statistics Service, 2019: 177–8.

## Conclusion

The ROC has been portrayed as the submissive servant of the state, from Peter I’s 1721 church reform to its alleged inability to stand up to the Soviet state, to its cooperation with the Putin regime. Recently, scholars have challenged this view, revealing tensions between religious and secular power but also how Orthodoxy served as an idiom for articulating ideas about nation and society and politics different from those of the imperial and Soviet states, and as a source of social mobilization in the face of the Bolsheviks’ attack on religion, amid the collapse of communism, and on the Maidan. Both the institutional church and the laity demonstrated in 1917 that they were not wedded to the monarchy. However, the Orthodox tradition of symphony has also led to a widespread assumption in both Russia and Ukraine that some sort of symbiotic relationship between church and state (or nation) is desirable. Yet the post-Soviet experience of building independent Russian and Ukrainian states has raised concretely the question of the applicability of symphony in modern pluralist societies. Since the sixteenth century, both the Russian and Ukrainian contexts have been multinational and multiconfessional (in the Ukrainian case even within the modern ethnic nation), complicating any easy symbiosis between one church and the state. Finally, the past looms large in the complex religious relations within modern Ukraine and between Ukraine and Russia. The conflict is not only political, but civilizational.

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## The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Europe

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### CHAPTER

## 45 Peripheries

Grace Davie, Ansgar Jödicke, Vasilios N. Makrides

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### Abstract

This short chapter contains three case studies: on Malta, Cyprus, and the South Caucasus. Given their respective locations on the southern and south-eastern extremities of Europe, all three have been subject to diverse and at times competing religious currents over many centuries. The impact of these currents needs careful interpretation. In the twenty-first century, Malta remains an actively Catholic society. Cyprus is still divided on ethno-religious lines: Turkish Cypriots are concentrated in the north and Greek Cypriots live in the south. The situation in the South Caucasus is more complex. It is shaped by a mixture of Western European, Russian, and Turkish references, but overall the region remains more a periphery of Europe than of Iran or Asia.

**Keywords:** [Cyprus](#), [Malta](#), [South Caucasus](#), [Europe](#), [periphery](#), [diversity](#)

**Subject:** [History of Religion](#), [Religion](#)

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IT is clear that the western boundary of Europe is easier to define than its eastern equivalent. Regarding the latter, this *Handbook* has sought to be as comprehensive as possible, choosing to include chapters on Ukraine and Russia on the one hand and Turkey on the other. The logic of this decision requires three additional entries: on the two Mediterranean islands which are nation-states in their own right (Malta and Cyprus), and on the South Caucasus. Each of these cases will be taken in turn. Over many centuries, all three have been subject to diverse and at times competing religious currents which require careful interpretation.

## Malta

The archipelago that constitutes Malta (the smallest nation-state in the EU) lies at the centre of the Mediterranean, some hundred miles south of Sicily. Given its position, Malta has not only been politically strategic, but subject to cultural influences from all directions (Goodwin, 2002). The immediate link of Malta to the early church—the shipwreck of the Apostle Paul recounted in the Acts of the Apostles is commemorated each February—weights this legacy heavily in favour of Christianity.

The twists and turns of Malta's past are not easily summarized. Setting aside pre-history, they include: the early Christian centuries; Muslim occupation from 870 to 1127, with a lasting effect on the Maltese language; a return to Christianity under the Normans; and a period under Aragonese rule during which Malta's Jews were forced either to convert or to leave the country. From the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, the islands were governed by the eponymous Knights of Malta; the Grand Master had the status of a prince of the Catholic Church. Napoleon arrived in 1798, to be ousted by the British in 1815. British rule lasted until 1964 when Malta gained independence.

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The current Constitution establishes Catholicism as the state religion but guarantees freedom of religion to minorities. The dominance of the Catholic Church remains overwhelming: a 2018 poll discovered that well over 90 per cent of Maltese people identify as Catholic, almost all of whom would resist an attempt to alter the constitutional status of their religion.<sup>1</sup> Religious practice is falling, especially among young people, but the continuing impact of Catholicism is undeniable (Briffa, 2019). Malta was the last country in Europe to permit divorce (in 2011). It endorsed civil unions in 2014 and same-sex marriage in 2017, but abortion remains illegal to this day (2021). In material terms the presence of Catholicism is affirmed in its 360 churches, which serve a population of just under half a million.

Among the religious minorities are other Christians (not least expatriate Anglicans from Britain), some Muslims, and a small number of Jews. A mosque was built in the 1970s in an attempt to restore the country's Islamic legacy. Recent estimates suggest some 3,000 Muslims, most of whom are foreigners—a number likely to increase (Pew Research Center, 2017). Jews, of which 250 remain, have a long and chequered history on the island; a new synagogue was dedicated in 2000.

## Cyprus

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Due to its strategic location in the Eastern Mediterranean, the island of Cyprus—like Malta—has been a place of encounter for many peoples, religions, and cultures throughout its turbulent history. Over time, Christianity became established; it was introduced by the apostles Paul and Barnabas around 45 CE, and consolidated in the Cypriot Orthodox Church, which was autocephalous as early as the fifth century (Englezakis, 1995). Under Frankish (1192–1489) and Venetian (1489–1571) rule, Orthodox Cypriots were exposed to Roman Catholic pressures, but under Ottoman domination (1571–1878) the Orthodox Church enjoyed several privileges. Indeed in 1660, its Archbishop was recognized as the 'ethnarch' (leader) of the Cypriot community. Christians and Muslims coexisted during this period without major incidents (Dietzel, 2014).

Their rivalry developed during British rule (1878–1960) due to growing nationalization (Bryant, 2004), as the Orthodox Church supported the union with Greece and the anti-colonial struggle, which resulted in the vacancy of the Archbishop's office between 1933 and 1946. In 1950, a charismatic cleric became Archbishop, Makarios III (1913–1977), and when Cyprus gained independence in 1960, Makarios also became the country's first president until his death. Following mounting interethnic tensions between Greek and Turkish Cypriots and a failed coup by the military junta of Greece to overthrow Makarios, Turkey invaded Cyprus in 1974 and occupied its northern third, prompting additional immigrants to settle there. This radically divided Cyprus on ethno-religious lines with Turkish Cypriots concentrated in the Turkish-occupied area and Greek Cypriots living in the south. Efforts to reunify the island have failed until today. Many churches and monasteries in the Turkish-occupied area have been deserted, pillaged, or destroyed. Only the Republic of Cyprus, a Member State of the European Union (EU) since 2004, is internationally recognized, whereas the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is recognized solely by Turkey. Despite criticism from various sides, Makarios remains a popular, symbolic, and revered figure for Greek Cypriots (Mayes, 1981; Assos, 2018).

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Both historically and currently, Cyprus exhibits high levels of religious plurality. Islam first set foot on the island in the late seventh century through Arab conquests in the south, and three centuries of Ottoman presence have significantly shaped Cypriot culture. Aside from crypto-Christians and converts to Islam, the practice of Christians and Muslims sharing shrines and places of pilgrimage was common; such interfaith festivities have declined however since 1974. Mosques and other historical places of worship exist throughout the island. The Hanafi school of Sunni Islam, an institution devoted to Islamic legal thought, predominates. Turkish Cypriots are not generally observant Muslims, as they tend to be somewhat liberal and secularized.

The Roman Catholics on the island date from the Frankish and Venetian periods, which left an imprint on religious architecture. The Maronites (Syrian Lebanese Christians united with Rome) settled in Cyprus by the eighth century and are also part of its heritage. Possessing a strong sense of ethno-religious identity, the Armenian community dates back to the sixth century, noting that many Armenians fled to Cyprus more recently, to escape the genocide in the twilight of the Ottoman Empire (Pattie, 1997). There is also a small Anglican community, a result of the British rule. Other than Muslims, most religious minorities opted after 1974 to reside in the Greek Cypriot south. Although Orthodoxy predominates and remains highly influential (Theodoulou, 2005), the Cypriot constitution of 1960 considers the state to be non-confessional, guarantees religious freedom, and provides certain privileges for the historic religious communities (Emilianides, 2019). All in all, Cyprus constitutes a fascinating place where religions (especially the Orthodox Church) have been inextricably intertwined with the island's long history and continue even now to play a pivotal role.

## The South Caucasus

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Gaining their independence in 1991, the three South Caucasian states—Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia—embraced a Western-oriented and democratic vision, expressed in the desire to cooperate with the EU or even to become a member. Their resolve to pursue this reorientation towards Western Europe has, however, weakened since the millennium. Georgia became disillusioned when Europe (and NATO) did not intervene militarily against Russia in the 2008 war. Similarly, from the mid-1990s, Azerbaijan was disappointed that Europe had not reacted to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the same way that it did after the Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula. Today, for all three countries, the only advantages of engagement with the EU stem from membership of its Eastern Partnership initiative. In short, looking at the South Caucasus as a periphery of Europe coincides with Caucasian self-understanding regarding some aspects of its history but not all. The metaphor of the region being a 'bridge' between Europe and Asia is very common.

Geopolitical constellations are relevant for religious history. Besides the European point of reference, other centre-periphery relations are also pertinent. The surrounding powers, namely the Byzantine, Persian, Ottoman, and Russian Empires, each tended to regard the small kingdoms in the South Caucasus as part of their own sphere of influence. Changing rulers, and the geographically advantageous position of the region at the crossroads of important economic transit routes, fostered both exchange and resistance in culture and religion.

Overall, the common historical and socio-political experience of the region supports a single explanatory account, despite the fact that each country has a majority of a different religion: the Armenian Apostolic Church (AAC) as a branch of the Oriental Orthodox tradition, the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) as an autocephalous church of the Eastern Orthodox Communion, and Twelver Shia Islam in Azerbaijan with a substantial Sunni minority. With this in mind, the following approach considers the social and political frame more important for religious development than the different 'theologies'. Accordingly, the discussion

begins with a focus on the interconnections between the region's religious history and its socio-political development. A more sociological perspective on religious changes since independence follows.

## East–West competition before the eighteenth century

Human habitation in the area of the South Caucasus began in the very distant past. A famous prehistoric fossil from Georgia plays a principal role in theorizing the hominin migration from Africa to Europe by scientifically placing an early population of hominids in the area around 1.8 million years ago. Further archaeological finds constitute evidence for the constant presence of agriculturalists since the Neolithic revolution.

From the first millennium BCE until the eighteenth century, the overall framing—with only few exceptions—was a competition between two foreign centres of power: one in the south-east (Achaemenid, Seleucid, Sassanid, Safavid) and one in the west (Greek, Byzantine, Roman, Ottoman). Within this constellation, smaller kingdoms flourished, and resistant religious traditions evolved.

p. 786 Christianity gained political significance after the legendary baptism of King Trdat III in 301 (r. 298–c.330) in East-Armenia (today Armenia) and of King Mirian III in 317 (r. 284–361) in Iberia (today Georgia). A third Christian kingdom, Albania (today Azerbaijan), and a third associated church existed for a time, but was probably Armenianized, though this is fiercely contested by some Azerbaijani historians. Contemporary nationalism in all three countries strongly references medieval cultural and religious attainments: the development of the Armenian (and most probably Albanian) alphabet by the Armenian monk Mesrop Mashtots, and the development of three autonomous churches in Armenia, Iberia, and Albania. In Georgia's 'Golden Age', under King David IV the Builder (r. 1089–1125) and Queen Tamar (r. 1184–1213) from the eleventh to the thirteenth century, the Gelati academy was a centre for the translation and production of Byzantine manuscripts. Gelati maintained a network of communications with European centres of learning.

However, Christianity did not undermine the strong relationship with the powers in the south-east. Although religion became a basis for the cultural and political connection with Byzantium (later Constantinople), political dependencies did not follow religious lines. Sassanid Persia defeated the Armenian kingdom in 451 and tried forcibly to implement Zoroastrianism. Yet, Armenian Christianity was strong enough to resist. Eventually, the Persian rulers accepted Christianity, but Armenia and Albania came under Persian rule. When the AAC separated from the Greek Eastern Orthodox tradition in the aftermath of the Council of Chalcedon (451), the political relationship to Sassanid Persia was a crucial factor.

The development of Islam was less homogeneous than that of the Christian churches. Islamization after the Arab conquest in the seventh century remained weak in the South-West Caucasus. Nevertheless, Oghuz, Seljuk, and Mongolian rulers brought different forms of Sunni Islam, before the Safavid Shah Ismail I (1487–1524) established the province of Shirvan in the East Caucasus with a long-lasting Twelver Shia connection to Persia from the early sixteenth century onwards. Overall, rulers in the territory of contemporary Azerbaijan did not develop their 'own' religion. They remained on the religious periphery of Shia centres like Qom.

At all times, the South Caucasus was religiously diverse. Among many others, Jews have lived in this region since the time of the earliest records. Quite possibly Georgian Jews migrated to the Caucasus as early as the sixth century BCE. Mountain Jews in Azerbaijan probably came from Iraq between the fifth and seventh centuries CE. Only Ashkenazi Jews arrived later, in modern times, often as refugees.

Overall, the religious traditions evolved alongside the development of the three South Caucasian political centres. During periods of occupation, religious elites preserved their traditions in the mountainous

monasteries on the periphery. In contrast to the Eastern Caucasus, the areas that would become contemporary Armenia and Georgia developed their own centres of religion.

## The Russian Caucasus from the eighteenth century to 1991

p. 787 During the eighteenth century the geopolitical situation changed. The Russian–Ottoman Wars and the Russian–Persian Wars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries became ↴ more important for the Caucasus than the Ottoman–Persian rivalry. In the eighteenth century, this triple constellation of powers was in a fragile state. However, from the Treaty of Turkmenchay (1828) until the dissolution of the Soviet Union (1991), Russia dominated the South Caucasus despite ongoing conflicts with the Ottomans and some changes to the southern border. The South Caucasus became a periphery of the Russian empire.

Russian Tsars continued Peter the Great’s bureaucratic religious policy, and the Russian Orthodox Church became an institution of the absolutist state. Consequently, the GOC was dissolved and incorporated into the Russian Church (1811). The AAC profited from a greater distance from Russian Orthodoxy and sustained itself as a politically controlled institution of the Russian Empire. Furthermore, Muslims became part of a new Muslim Spiritual Administration which still exists despite several changes of name.

Through Russia, the Caucasus of the nineteenth century was connected with European politics, arts, the Enlightenment, and nascent nationalism. National discourses prospered in the work of well-known figures who in different ways combined political emancipation with national language, religion, literature, or music. When involved, religion became a cultural component of nationalism. In Georgia, Ilia Chavchavadze (1837–1907) declared homeland, language, and religion as the three pillars of nationalism. The Armenian priest and composer Soghomon Soghomonian (1869–1935), also known as Komitas, collected Armenian songs and founded the empirical bases for ethnomusicology. Early Azerbaijani nationalists had different attitudes towards religion: Abbasgulu Bakikhanov (1794–1847) was fascinated by Shia mystical thought, but Mirza Fatali Akhundov (1812–1878) was a strict atheist. At the turn of the century, Muslim intellectuals in pre-revolutionary Baku adopted the Russian Muslim reform movement (Jadidism) and encouraged progressive innovation in the social life of the upcoming oil metropole.

The short interruption of Russian dominance after the Russian Revolution between 1917 and 1920/1 is a complex story of independent political units, and a crucial point of reference for contemporary nation building in all three countries. Democratization and modernization shaped social and political ideas, partly with the support of religious (mostly Muslim) intellectuals. Georgian bishops demonstrated the still-lively concept of religious autonomy by re-establishing the GOC immediately after the political breakdown of the Russian Empire, even before politicians established a parliamentary assembly.

The Bolsheviks occupied the South Caucasus in 1920–1; incorporation into the Soviet Union followed. The Soviet Union’s religious policy led to the massive destruction (or rededication) of churches and mosques. The persecution of clergy diminished religious life profoundly. However, the South Caucasian Soviet Socialist Republics experienced an increase in religious activities in the 1980s as elsewhere in the communist world. Furthermore, emerging nationalism benefited from religious roots in Armenia and Georgia in particular. Its potential for opposition contributed to the decline of the Soviet Union.

## After independence

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the proclamation of independent statehood, a widely shared, pro-European political orientation evolved alongside the experience of political freedom. Most authors discuss the religious development after independence using the somewhat unpolitical term ‘religious revival’ (Balci and Goyushov, 2013; Wiktor-Mach, 2017). It is true that in an initial phase of the liberalization of religious law, all sanctions against religion disappeared. However, the struggles for a new social and political order were accompanied by riots, civil war, and corruption. Geopolitical conflicts and territorial instability have been the common experience for many years. Religious developments can only be understood against this backdrop. This remains the case well into the twentieth century when in the summer of 2020 Azerbaijani troops recaptured the Nagorno-Karabakh region in order to restore their territorial integrity. This was an historical and territorial issue; in no way was it a religious conflict.

That said religion did—most certainly—become more dynamic after 1991. However, the term ‘revival’ is problematic because it both designates and merges different levels of change. First, religion became more visible in the public sphere; second, religious leaders became more influential in politics; and third, more people joined religious groups. All these changes need to be explained against the backdrop of the Soviet legacy and the chaotic process of social transition.

First, religion became more visible and more important in public life and discourse. Both the restitution of church property, and the renovation and construction of churches and mosques supported by the state, were signs of the positive valuing of religion in society and of the powerful influence of religious institutions. In contrast to nationalism in the late Soviet Union, post-Soviet nationalism was, by definition, anti-Soviet for the great majority of its protagonists. During the 1990s, the ‘ethno-religious’ component grew (Agadjanian, 2015), leading to subsequent tensions between dominance and tolerance in religious policies.

For example, alongside religious nationalism, public discussion about the role of religion, religious pluralism, and religious tolerance developed in all three countries. Religious diversity became a task of political governance, and was also a factor in bilateral relations with the EU. Interestingly, migration dynamics after independence—both forced migration within the Caucasus because of armed conflicts, and migration to and from countries outside the region—homogenized rather than pluralized the ethnic and religious landscape. Nevertheless, there are still considerable minorities, for example, Jews, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Yazidis, Buddhists, Russian Orthodox, Russian Old Believers, and Dukhobors, each with their own complex histories. Another type of minority is the growing number of neopagans, who had already appeared in the early twentieth century and flourished again after 1991. Facing the new political thinking about religious pluralism, changes in religious policy and tensions between support and restrictions were numerous (Shavtvaladze, 2018).

Second, the influence on politics of religious leaders increased in comparison with Soviet times. Such leaders publicly claimed to contribute to the re-establishment and construction of the social order using all forms of political influence, supportive or oppositional (Serrano, 2018). Armenia’s clergy built up ties with politicians and joined the evolving political clientelism. Georgia’s patriarch established a strong conservative opposition against the modernizing president Mikheil Saakashvili (2003–13). Islam in Azerbaijan was more heterogeneous, and the state-related religious institution (the Caucasus Muslim Board) could not represent all Muslims. Its long-time leader, Allahshukur Pashazadeh, was always loyal to the state, and since 1991 the Board has increasingly become an instrument of the state’s religious policy. However, in the 1990s Pashazadeh pursued his own political agenda; like other religious leaders, he acted as a diplomat in sensitive cases of foreign politics (Jödicke, 2018). Other groups of Muslims took on a more oppositional role prompting a harsh reaction from the ruling political elites.

Third, data from national censuses and international surveys concur in demonstrating that almost all respondents report belonging to a religious denomination (between 90 and 96 per cent according to the European Values Study, 2017). Furthermore, individual religiosity has different faces in the South Caucasus (Agadjanian, 2014; Darieva, Mühlfried, and Tuite, 2018). Thus, the category of ‘no religion’ or ‘atheist’ dominant in Soviet surveys has almost completely disappeared. These numbers are difficult to interpret. Many authors argue—either sociologically in opposition to secularization theory or politically in opposition to a supposedly anti-democratic religion—that these numbers indicate the strong religiosity of the populations. However, the percentage of people who attend religious services at least once a month is lower (Georgia: 32 per cent; Armenia: 44 per cent; Azerbaijan: 13 per cent, according to the European Values Study, 2017). An alternative explanation might suggest that belonging to a religious denomination, individual religiosity, and attending religious services are different aspects of what we call ‘religion’ today. Belonging can include the dimension of national identity. Trust in religious institutions depends on trust in other social institutions. Thus, the contrast with Soviet religious policy and the continuity of ‘cultural defence’ afforded by religion (Burchardt and Hovhannisyan, 2016) during the time of social disorder, offer better explanations for the ‘revival’ seen today, than the idea of conversion from atheism to religion.

## Conclusion

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Each of the above case studies reflects the exposure of peripheries to religious and cultural diversity. In the early twenty-first century, Malta remains firmly attached to the Western tradition. Cyprus, conversely, is still divided on ethno-religious lines: Turkish Cypriots are concentrated in the north and Greek Cypriots live in the south. The situation in the South Caucasus is more complex. Shaped by a mixture of Western European, Russian, and Turkish references, it remains, nonetheless, more a periphery of Europe than of Iran or Asia. Here the most significant differences between the Christian and Muslim traditions are due to their contrasting institutional structures. In other respects—individual religiosity, relationships to political institutions, and contributions to national identity—their relative positions are best understood in terms of the political nature of religion rather than its theological content.

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## Notes

1   See Kurt Sansone, 'Maltese identity still very much rooted in Catholicism', *Malta Today*, 2 April 2018, available at [https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/data\\_and\\_surveys/85738/maltatoday\\_survey\\_\\_maltese\\_identity\\_still\\_very\\_muc](https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/data_and_surveys/85738/maltatoday_survey__maltese_identity_still_very_muc)

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## The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Europe

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END MATTER

# Appendix Religions in Europe: A Statistical Summary

Gina A. Zurlo

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## Appendix

THE statistical summary of religion in Europe is contained in two tables. The first (Appendix Table 1) sets out the data relating to overall changes in the patterns of religion in Europe since 1900. The second (Appendix Table 2) contains estimates for religious affiliation by country, for the nation-states and other territories that make up Europe.

Europe became substantially more diverse in its religious makeup over the course of the twentieth century. In 1900 nearly 95 per cent of Europe's population professed some form of Christianity; in 2020 the continent is 76 per cent Christian. Here, 'Christian' is defined in terms of membership and affiliation with organized Christianity, not necessarily by a particular set of beliefs and practices. In the case of Europe, it is widely known that many are affiliated with churches (for example, they are baptized or married in the Roman Catholic Church) but do not adhere to traditional Christian beliefs.

The non-religious (atheists and agnostics together) increased from less than 1 per cent of Europe's population in 1900 to 15 per cent in 2020. Additional gains were made by Muslims, growing from 2 per cent to 7 per cent over the same period. Conversely, Europe's Jewish population declined substantially due to the Shoah and emigration, dropping from 2.4 per cent (9.7 million) to 0.2 per cent (1.3 million).

In these tables, adherents of 'Eastern religions' include Buddhists, Daoists, Chinese folk-religionists, Confucianists, Shintoists, Hindus, Sikhs, and Jains. 'Other religions' include adherents of various ethnic religions (including those indigenous to Europe and those arriving via migration), New Religions, Spiritists, Baha'i, and Zoroastrians.

The estimates for religious affiliation by country are compiled from a variety of source material, including government censuses, social scientific surveys and polls, and data from religious communities. In certain countries where no hard data or reliable surveys are available, we have relied on the informed estimates of experts in the field. ↵

**Appendix Table 1** Religions in Europe, 1900–2020

	1900		1970		2000		1900–2000	2020		2000–2020
	Adherents	%	Adherents	%	Adherents	%	% p.a.	Adherents	%	% p.a.
Religious	400,854,000	99.6	516,702,000	78.6	609,952,000	83.9	0.42	627,341,000	84.4	0.14
Christians	380,647,000	94.5	492,068,000	74.9	562,140,000	77.3	0.39	565,416,000	76.1	0.03
Catholics	180,044,000	44.7	248,593,000	37.8	253,403,000	34.8	0.34	248,378,000	33.4	-0.10
Orthodox	104,557,000	26.0	109,889,000	16.7	195,001,000	26.8	0.63	205,085,000	27.6	0.25
Protestants	84,540,000	21.0	108,935,000	16.6	91,900,000	12.6	0.08	87,051,000	11.7	-0.27
Independents	185,000	0.0	6,132,000	0.9	9,368,000	1.3	4.00	11,761,000	1.6	1.14
doubly affiliated	-529,000	-0.1	-7,070,000	-1.1	-5,575,000	-0.8	2.38	-8,117,000	-1.1	1.90
unaffiliated Christians	11,851,000	2.9	25,590,000	3.9	18,042,000	2.5	0.42	21,258,000	2.9	0.82
Jews	9,786,000	2.4	4,398,000	0.7	1,620,000	0.2	-1.78	1,318,000	0.2	-1.03

Muslims	9,365,000	2.3	18,247,000	2.8	40,567,000	5.6	1.48	53,885,000	7.2	1.43
Eastern religions	401,060	0.1	1,066,000	0.2	3,776,100	0.5	2.27	4,835,400	0.7	0.25
Other religions	654,110	0.2	922,410	0.1	1,849,400	0.3	1.04	1,887,000	0.3	0.02
Non-religious	1,753,000	0.4	140,648,000	21.4	117,249,000	16.1	4.29	116,049,000	15.6	-0.05
Atheists	205,000	0.1	53,815,000	8.2	17,631,000	2.4	4.55	15,422,000	2.1	-0.67
Agnostics	1,548,000	0.4	86,833,000	13.2	99,618,000	13.7	4.25	100,626,000	13.5	0.05
<b>Total population</b>	<b>402,607,000</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>657,350,000</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>727,201,000</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>0.59</b>	<b>743,390,000</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>0.11</b>

Data source: Todd M. Johnson and Brian J. Grim, (eds.). *World Christian Database* (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, accessed September 2020).

Note: Eastern religions are Chinese (Buddhist, Daoist, Chinese Folk-religions, Confucianist), Japanese (Shintoist) and Indian (Hindu, Sikh, Jain) -based religions.

Other religions are Ethnic religions (indigenous to Europe and through migration) plus New Religions, Spiritist, Baha'i, Zoroastrian.

**Appendix Table 2** Religious affiliation in Europe and selected countries, 2020 (%)

		Religious									
		<i>Christian traditions</i>									
Country/Region	Population	Christian	Catholic	Orthodox	Protestant	Independent	Unaffiliated Christian	Doubly affiliated	Jewish	Muslim	Eastern religions
Albania	2,942,000	<b>36.8</b>	17.5	18.0	0.4	1.0	0.0	-0.1	<b>0.0</b>	<b>60.2</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Andorra	77,200	<b>90.0</b>	84.6	0.0	0.2	0.8	4.7	-0.2	<b>0.4</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>0.6</b>
~Armenia	2,939,000	<b>94.4</b>	8.5	84.3	2.4	2.2	0.1	-3.1	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Austria	8,782,000	<b>71.5</b>	60.7	2.3	4.1	0.9	4.2	-0.8	<b>0.1</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>0.3</b>
~Azerbaijan	10,100,000	<b>2.4</b>	0.0	2.2	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	<b>0.1</b>	<b>96.2</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Belarus	9,415,000	<b>78.7</b>	11.0	60.3	2.7	0.4	4.7	-0.3	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Belgium	11,620,000	<b>62.7</b>	60.2	0.6	1.4	0.9	0.3	-0.7	<b>0.3</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>0.5</b>
Bosnia- Herzegovina	3,498,000	<b>48.6</b>	12.0	37.8	0.2	0.1	0.2	-1.6	<b>0.0</b>	<b>48.2</b>	<b>0.0</b>

Bulgaria	6,941,000	<b>82.8</b>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>81.0</i>	<i>2.0</i>	<i>0.8</i>	<i>0.1</i>	-2.2	<b>0.1</b>	<b>13.7</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Channel Islands	168,000	<b>85.0</b>	<i>13.7</i>	<i>0.1</i>	<i>49.9</i>	<i>0.2</i>	<i>21.1</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.1</b>
Croatia	4,116,000	<b>94.4</b>	<i>83.8</i>	<i>5.6</i>	<i>0.8</i>	<i>0.8</i>	<i>3.6</i>	-0.3	<b>0.0</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>0.0</b>
~Cyprus	1,207,000	<b>70.2</b>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>65.5</i>	<i>1.4</i>	<i>0.7</i>	<i>1.7</i>	-0.2	<b>0.0</b>	<b>23.2</b>	<b>2.0</b>
Czech Republic	10,633,000	<b>34.7</b>	<i>30.6</i>	<i>0.3</i>	<i>1.7</i>	<i>2.3</i>	<i>0.1</i>	-0.2	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0.5</b>
Denmark	5,797,000	<b>79.8</b>	<i>0.8</i>	<i>0.6</i>	<i>76.4</i>	<i>0.8</i>	<i>2.1</i>	-0.9	<b>0.1</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>0.6</b>
Estonia	1,301,000	<b>36.5</b>	<i>0.4</i>	<i>12.2</i>	<i>14.6</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>9.2</i>	-1.1	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.1</b>
Faeroe Islands	49,900	<b>97.9</b>	<i>0.4</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>95.5</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>0.9</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Finland	5,580,000	<b>77.1</b>	<i>0.3</i>	<i>1.2</i>	<i>71.2</i>	<i>0.7</i>	<i>4.3</i>	-0.5	<b>0.0</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>0.2</b>
France	65,721,000	<b>63.1</b>	<i>57.1</i>	<i>1.2</i>	<i>1.4</i>	<i>1.2</i>	<i>2.7</i>	-0.5	<b>0.7</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>1.2</b>
~Georgia	3,899,000	<b>86.0</b>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>83.5</i>	<i>0.2</i>	<i>1.7</i>	<i>0.1</i>	-0.6	<b>0.1</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

Germany	82,540,000	<b>65.9</b>	29.1	3.0	30.2	1.3	3.7	-1.3	<b>0.2</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>0.3</b>
Gibraltar	35,000	<b>88.9</b>	80.2	0.0	6.9	0.7	1.1	0.0	<b>1.7</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>1.8</b>
Greece	11,103,000	<b>88.9</b>	1.2	87.1	0.2	0.8	0.2	-0.7	<b>0.1</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>0.3</b>
~Greenland	56,800	<b>95.7</b>	0.2	0.0	63.5	1.6	30.3	0.0	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Holy See	800	<b>100.0</b>	98.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.2	0.0	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Hungary	9,621,000	<b>87.3</b>	60.3	1.5	26.2	1.9	0.3	-2.9	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.1</b>
Iceland	343,000	<b>92.2</b>	3.8	0.3	79.0	6.8	2.6	-0.3	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0.5</b>
Ireland	4,888,000	<b>90.7</b>	75.1	0.2	3.5	1.2	12.3	-1.6	<b>0.0</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>0.3</b>
Isle of Man	85,900	<b>82.7</b>	7.9	0.0	54.7	1.2	19.6	-0.8	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0.2</b>
Italy	59,132,000	<b>75.9</b>	72.9	2.1	0.7	1.7	0.2	-1.6	<b>0.0</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>1.0</b>
~Kazakhstan	18,777,000	<b>25.8</b>	0.7	24.0	0.3	0.7	0.3	0.0	<b>0.0</b>	<b>70.7</b>	<b>0.1</b>



Kosovo	2,096,000	<b>6.3</b>	3.1	2.5	0.6	0.1	0.0	0.0	<b>0.0</b>	<b>92.6</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Latvia	1,893,000	<b>82.0</b>	23.1	22.7	37.3	0.5	0.1	-1.7	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Liechtenstein	38,600	<b>87.8</b>	71.4	1.3	10.1	0.4	6.2	-1.6	<b>0.1</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Lithuania	2,852,000	<b>89.3</b>	77.3	4.9	1.5	1.0	4.9	-0.3	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Luxembourg	604,000	<b>76.7</b>	74.5	0.1	1.6	1.1	0.5	-1.1	<b>0.1</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Malta	434,000	<b>95.7</b>	89.8	1.0	0.3	0.6	4.0	0.0	<b>0.0</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Moldova	4,018,000	<b>97.5</b>	0.5	95.1	1.2	1.3	0.1	-0.8	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Monaco	39,300	<b>85.1</b>	81.9	0.2	2.6	0.0	1.3	-0.9	<b>1.5</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Montenegro	629,000	<b>79.1</b>	3.6	71.1	2.5	1.8	0.1	0.0	<b>0.0</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Netherlands	17,181,000	<b>55.2</b>	25.7	0.1	16.3	2.5	10.7	0.0	<b>0.2</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>2.0</b>
North Macedonia	2,088,000	<b>64.0</b>	0.8	62.8	0.5	0.5	0.0	-0.6	<b>0.0</b>	<b>32.7</b>	<b>0.0</b>

Norway	5,450,000	<b>84.6</b>	3.3	0.4	72.4	1.5	10.0	-2.9	<b>0.0</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>1.0</b>
Poland	37,942,000	<b>95.9</b>	89.9	1.5	0.4	0.7	4.1	-0.8	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Portugal	10,218,000	<b>89.4</b>	84.7	0.0	1.4	4.1	0.4	-1.2	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>1.1</b>
Romania	19,388,000	<b>98.6</b>	7.2	88.2	10.2	1.2	0.1	-8.2	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Russia	143,787,000	<b>82.0</b>	0.5	79.2	1.0	1.3	0.2	-0.3	<b>0.1</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>0.4</b>
San Marino	33,800	<b>91.5</b>	85.8	0.0	0.0	0.8	4.9	0.0	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Serbia	6,608,000	<b>89.5</b>	6.1	83.9	1.4	0.5	4.7	-7.0	<b>0.0</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Slovakia	5,451,000	<b>84.5</b>	72.5	0.9	7.6	0.5	3.1	-0.2	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Slovenia	2,082,000	<b>82.3</b>	74.0	2.9	1.7	0.6	3.5	-0.3	<b>0.0</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Spain	46,459,000	<b>85.8</b>	83.9	1.7	0.3	1.2	0.4	-1.7	<b>0.1</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>0.2</b>
Sweden	10,122,000	<b>57.9</b>	1.2	1.3	55.6	0.7	0.7	-1.6	<b>0.2</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>0.7</b>

Switzerland	8,671,000	<b>74.1</b>	39.4	1.6	29.5	2.7	1.1	-0.2	<b>0.2</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>0.7</b>
~Turkey	83,836,000	<b>0.2</b>	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	<b>0.0</b>	<b>98.3</b>	<b>0.1</b>
Ukraine	43,579,000	<b>86.4</b>	11.2	72.8	1.9	1.8	0.0	-1.4	<b>0.1</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>0.1</b>
United Kingdom	67,334,000	<b>67.1</b>	9.5	0.9	39.8	4.0	13.0	-0.2	<b>0.4</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>2.4</b>

Data source: Todd M. Johnson and Brian J. Grim, (eds.), *World Religion Database* (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, accessed September 2020).

Notes: ~ countries outside the UN's definition of Europe: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Georgia, Greenland, Kazakhstan, Turkey

Eastern religions are Chinese (Buddhist, Daoist, Chinese Folk-religions, Confucianist), Japanese (Shintoist) and Indian (Hindu, Sikh, Jain) -based religions.

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